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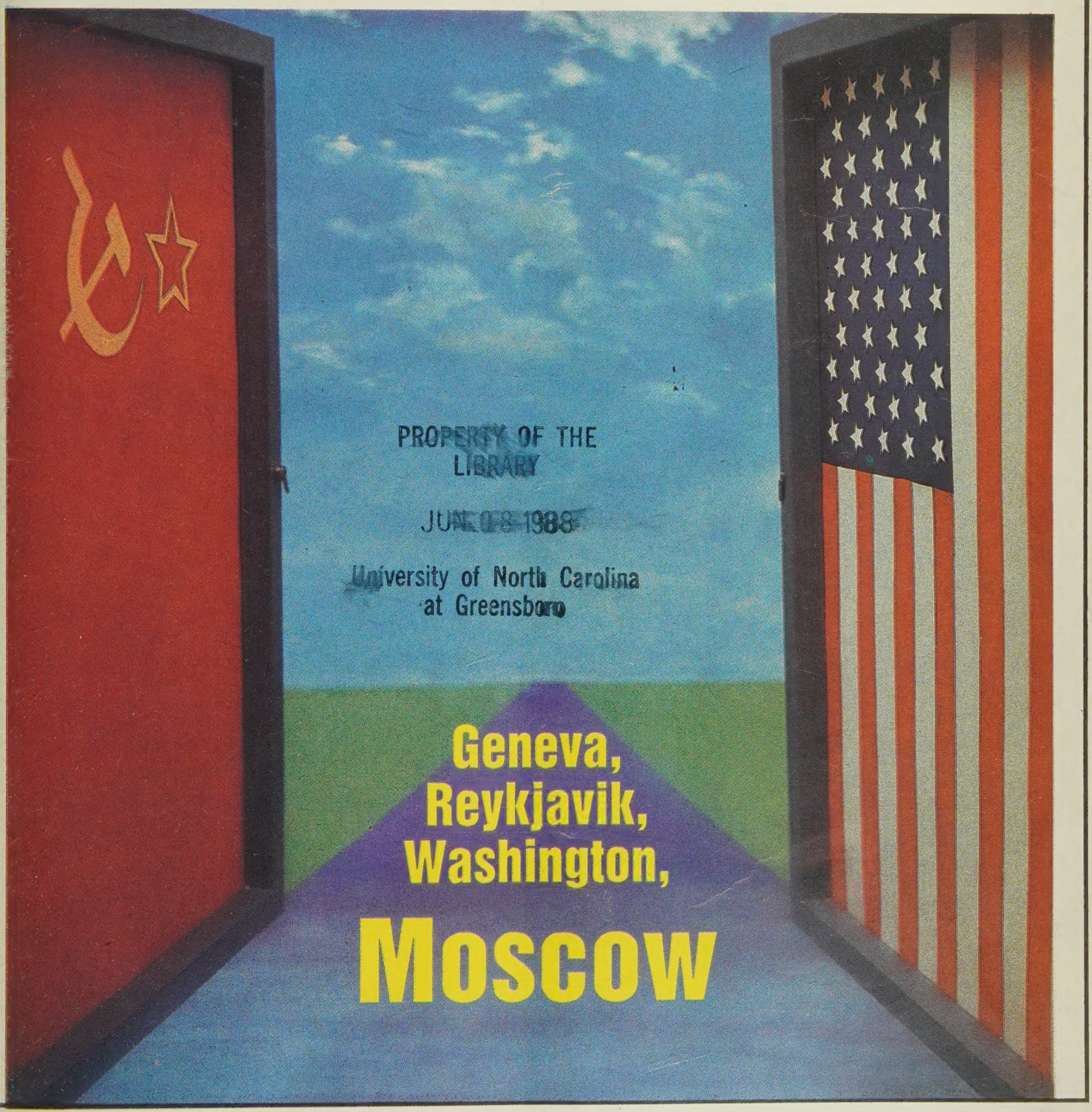

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THE MAIN THEME

Mikhail Gorbachev's answers to questions from Washington Post and Newsweek

pp.4-13

CONTENTS:

2
Glasnost

14

HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

15

Summit
Valentin Falin
James Callaghan
William Rogers
Alexander Bovin
Andries van Agt
Andrei Kokoshkin
WHAT WE EXPECT

18
Afghanistan
Lev Yelin
EXIT WAR, ENTER PEACE

21
U.S.S.R.: Perestroika and democracy
Leonid Sotnik
SHARES FOR SALE

ВСЕСОЮЗНАЯ XIX КОНФЕРЕНЦИЯ КПСС

23
Reflections
Tair Tairov
DEMOCRACY MUST BE GUARANTEED

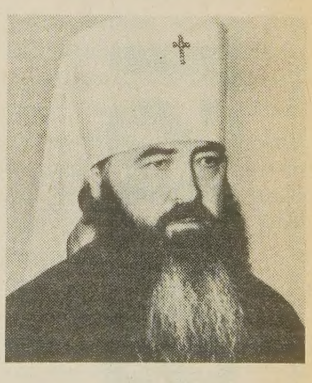
25
Poland
Zdzislaw Sadowski
A TRYING TIME

28

Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
Boris Sergeyev
DO NOT BLAME THE LOCOMOTIVE

31

Religion
Igor Sukhanov
THE MILLENNIUM OF CHRISTIANITY IN RUSSIA



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OPINIONS

ISAO ASHIBA,
Tokyo, Japan

■ *At the end of last year I took a trip to Hiroshima. In front of the Memorial Hall in the Peace Park, I chanced to talk with an old man feeding a flock of doves. He told me that he had lost his wife and two children in the atomic raid. When the A-bomb exploded they were having a meal. The table was between two walls, and they found themselves sandwiched between them. The fire spread rapidly. His family died, but he miraculously survived. I can never forget his last words to me: "Peace is my plea. The voices of my dear ones crying for help are still fresh in my ears. The tragic story of Hiroshima will never end. Peace cannot be secured in this world unless mankind strives for it with a strong will."*

I recognized in this old man, as manifested by the manner of his appeal, the ardent wish that everyone should work actively to prevent a repetition of his tragedy. I do not believe there is anything stronger than the firm will of men. Mr Gorbachev strikes me as the embodiment of such a will. I cannot help but pray that each little step taken for the sake of peace should echo the feelings of those who survived the atomic horror, and will be developed into mighty strides leading to the realization of true harmony and justice in the world.

MARIE BERARD,
Paris, France

■ *I am old and have seen a great deal in my life. Like thousands of others, I welcome the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. But one question troubles me. I know what war means: I was almost twenty when Hitler's armies invaded France. And I know the effect it has on one's psychology, character and even outlook. But then we lived through that horror all together, the entire nation. Now... How will the young people who have returned from the battlefield be able to live alongside those whose life had meanwhile been peaceful? I'm afraid that a whole generation in your country will be divided into diametrically opposite camps according to the principle – "he fought," "he didn't." And those who fought will never be able to forgive the others for their suffering, and the deaths they witnessed in their youth. I am practically certain that such a problem will arise. What I don't know is how you will resolve it.*

EDWARD ASHE,
Brunswick, U.S.A.

■ *Dear president Reagan,*

Why is it, whenever reference is made to the SDI programme, it usually is said that we can defend ourselves against a "Russian Nuclear Attack?"

As a disabled veteran of WW II who served two years in Burma, I am as patriotic as the next person. However, I feel that the government news releases should say "Enemy Nuclear Attack" and not always make it appear that Russia is our one and only enemy in the world. Further, I feel that General Secretary Gorbachev has gone a long way towards reducing tensions between our two countries. I am sure that he is aware that a large combat force drains the resources of Russia as it does with the United States. I feel that the reference to Russia as the "enemy" prevents any progress towards normal relations between our two countries.

FROM THE EDITOR:
Edward Ashe addressed his letter to the President of his country. However, he also sent a copy to the U.S.S.R. addressed to the General Secretary of the CC CPSU Mikhail Gorbachev. Apparently Mr Ashe wanted to show the attitude of ordinary people in the United States to the Soviet Union and the Soviet people. In his view, one way of dispelling the "enemy image" is to stop using the word "enemy." There can be no denying that that alone would find a considerable response in people's minds and hearts. But, in our view, there are many aspects to this problem. We invite you, our readers, to give thought to the matter together with us on the Glasnost pages as to what should be done for relations between countries, and even more importantly, between the people inhabiting them, to be more open and display greater trust in each other.

YOUR COMMENTS INVITED

GRIGORI PARASOL,
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

■ *I am no economist or philosopher, but many of the articles in our press on economic problems, specifically, price formation, seem wrong to me. As I understand it, the state today is most concerned about the money kept by people in a "sock," that is, money that is not in circulation. It is reported that the population has tens of billions of rubles on its hands, and this is explained by the imbalance in the tax system and the creation of privileged groups. But only a small number of people have high incomes earned honestly, while there are thousands of millionaires!*

So, when approaching the problem of price formation, one should first of all define what category of the population it concerns. And the population, strange as it may sound, can be divided into two main groups: those who work honestly and the "cheaters" (classification suggested by journalist A. Nuikin). To the first category, in my view, belong honest working people who have monthly incomes of up to 1,000 rubles for the whole family (with the exception, of course, of the most famous actors, artists, writers, etc.), and to the second category belong those who get almost as much per day.

Where do they come from, these millionaires? First among them are bribe-takers, those who accept bribes for allocating housing, jumping the queue, dropping criminal inquiries, etc. as well as directors or managers of big factories that falsify output figures to get bonuses for overfulfilling plan quotas. Yet another group is made up of black marketeers for whom to this day conditions for their nefarious deals are extremely favourable. Some writers set out to prove that low prices only tend to step up black market operations. That is far from being the case! Each price increase raises the "extra money" (or profits) of the black marketeers. That, for instance, was what happened when petrol prices were increased: you had to pay more for it when buying it in the black market. I feel certain that exactly the same thing will happen if meat prices are pushed up. Today if a Muscovite wants to buy a decent cut of meat, he must have his "own" butcher whom he will pay, say, an extra ruble per kg. Any increase in meat prices will not increase the amount of meat on

sale, so the butcher will just be demanding twice as much extra as before. So who stands to benefit? Not the customer. And it will be the black marketeers who'll be raking in more! Our illegal millionaires fear no price increases: if they had to pay 22 rubles for a kg of meat instead of 2 rubles they wouldn't even notice it! So, as I see it, any increase in the prices of food that will still remain in short supply will only increase the money raked in by those who keep it out of circulation.

One of the main arguments offered in favour of raising food prices is the high production cost of agricultural produce. The state's gifts – subsidies – amount to huge sums. But suppose you look at this problem from another point of view? We are far from being in the state's debt when it comes to the prices of cars, which are several times higher than their production cost, or fruit or coffee, let alone alcoholic beverages. If one counts up that "subsidy" (only this time it is from the people's pockets into the state's coffers) then I think we are quits. I believe that the emphasis should be on reducing the production costs of agricultural produce, not on pushing up prices, which would make collective and state farms totally uninterested in reducing costs. Higher prices have a corrupting effect on producers. It is also necessary to cut the apparatus staff in agriculture. It would be right to introduce a system of staff salaries for this apparatus (including the ministries) which would depend directly on the sales of this sector of the economy.

And the conclusion that suggests itself from all the above is that a sharp cutback in apparatus staff, an efficiently run agricultural sector, and an active battle against corruption (primarily by economic methods) would have such an economic effect that one could in the near future consider REDUCING retail prices and stabilizing the Soviet ruble.

PAVEL SMAGA,
Poltava, U.S.S.R.

■ *Today we are trying to determine the sources of the problem of bureaucracy. We are trying to understand why the bureaucrat continued to exist after the revolution and adapted very successfully to the new conditions. The authors of many publications on this complex problem unanimously agree that bureaucracy should be combated by glasnost. All that is so. But in my opinion that is not enough. Glasnost only allows us to point our finger at the bureaucrat and say: "That's him." And nothing more. Bureaucratism is the result of shortcomings in economic relations in society, and it can be fought only by economic methods. Only through a radical reorganization of the economy, the formation of an integral scientific theory of the political economy of socialism, and studying and observing the objective laws of its development – only through all that will we have a chance of coping with all our difficulties.*

AN ARTIST'S COMMENT

A year has passed since the West German pilot Mathias Rust made his flight, so disturbing for us all. Does everyone remember it? Has everyone learned its lessons?

V. Ivanko,
Leningrad,
U.S.S.R.

Drawing by Vsevolod Arsenyev

GLASNOST

CONTINUING THE DISCUSSION

YEVDOKIM SOLENKOV,
Sofia, Bulgaria

■ *The letter from a reader in San Remo (No. 15/88) irritated me. The truth about history has to be told. But he says "let's not condemn anyone for mistakes, but look ahead." It is blasphemous to describe as "mistakes" the repression and extermination of untold numbers of innocent people who were loyal to the people's cause. Even if establishing the truth had nothing to do with perestroika, it would still be necessary so that moral justice could triumph, so that there should never be any repetition of such things. And now it is more than ever necessary. The letter published on March 13 in Sovetskaya Rossiya showed that in our times there is still quite a lot of support for the methods of the Stalin age. I think that this is largely due to the fact that the crimes of the thirties-to-fifties were never fully spoken about. Not knowing the truth, many people made a sort of idol out of Stalin. And to tell the truth, that is not their fault. It hurts me to see a young man of about 25 carrying a portrait of Stalin, while all he knows about him is that he "won" the Great Patriotic War and "brought order" to the country, though, yes, he did make a number of mistakes. I think it is absolutely essential to tell that young man the whole truth about our past.*

What I find particularly obnoxious is the claim that it was thanks to Stalin that the Soviet Union won the war. I'm no historian, but I maintain that the victory over the fascist invaders was won first and foremost by the ordinary Soviet people, who despite immense suffering, deprivation and humiliation still managed to stand firm. Yes, it's true that many went into battle with the words "For our Motherland! For Stalin!" on their lips. But it doesn't follow that Stalin deserved such an honour. Moreover, I would say that the war was won not thanks to Stalin, but despite Stalin.

It seems to me that if today, 35 years after the death of Stalin, no light is thrown on our past, then it never will be. Or simply, it will be too late.

■

Mikhail Gorbachev's answers to questions

from Washington Post and Newsweek

The interview in progress.

Photo by Y. Lizunov and A. Chumichev (TASS)

Question. Have the three meetings with President Reagan changed your ideas as to how peaceful competition between capitalist and socialist countries should be regulated in the future? How do you think the forthcoming summit will contribute to stabilizing that competition?

Answer. I am convinced that positive trends are unfolding in the world. There is a turning away from confrontation towards coexistence. The winds of the cold war are being replaced by the winds of hope. And I see that a significant role in that process is being played by the signs of improvement in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. All over the world there is an acute need for change or, if you wish, a need to restructure international relations. In that situation it is essential to continue to have positive contacts between East and West.

As for the dialogue between the United States and the Soviet Union, it is simply vital because of the great role they play in today's world.

The very fact that that dialogue is taking place is a step in the right direction, not to mention its content, with such exceptionally important joint statements as those regarding the inadmissibility of wars, nuclear or any other, the necessity of resolving problems by political means and of recognizing the realities of today's world.

It is very important that all this has sounded loud and clear for the whole world to hear, and we have seen how the world has responded to it. All this leads to the following conclusion: yes, we are different and will remain so. We will remain loyal to our ideas and our way of life. But we have a common responsibility, which is especially true of our two great powers, and our every action must be weighed in the context of that responsibility.

As for the potential results of the forthcoming fourth meeting with the President and, notably, the prospects for a detailed agreement on a 50 per cent cut in strategic offensive weapons, the past few months and weeks have seen so much speculation that I would like to make the following point: be patient, the meeting is just a few days away, let the President and me work together. Whatever we arrive at will certainly not be concealed from the public.

There are two points I'd like to make here, though. The very continuation of the Soviet-American dialogue at summit level is important and substantive. In any case, I hope our attention will be focussed on the main international problems as at our previous meetings and

that we will be able to rise to a new level of dialogue and mutual understanding.

And if an agreement on a 50 per cent reduction in strategic offensive weapons comes to be drafted under the present U.S. administration, I see no reason why President Reagan and I should not sign it. I would certainly welcome that.

Question. Many people in the West think that nuclear weapons have been instrumental in maintaining stability in the world over the past few decades. Would it not be more rational for the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. in those conditions to agree to preserve minimal nuclear deterrence?

Answer. I cannot agree with those who think that the drive for a nuclear-free world is hopeless.

I have polemized more than once with Westerners over their argument that without nuclear weapons we would never have survived for 40 years without another world war. This is just a conjecture. But what about a sober evaluation of the real role played by the so-called "balance of terror"? It has given us nothing but unheard-of militarization in foreign policies, economics and even intellectual life. It has caused damage in the sphere of international morality and ethics and has destroyed the atmosphere of mutual trust, friendliness and sincere interest in each other which was born in Soviet-American relations in the years of joint warfare and victory over fascism.

I am convinced that strategic military parity can be maintained at a low level and without nuclear weapons. We have clearly formulated our choice: to stop and then reverse the arms race.

As for the so-called "minimal nuclear deterrence," I will not argue now with the proponents of that idea. So far, we have more than 10,000 warheads each in our strategic arsenals. Let us first cut them by 50 per cent, and then maybe by another 50 per cent, and then once again. In the meantime, let us come to terms on the elimination of chemical weapons, and start reducing conventional armaments in Europe. That process should be open not only to the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. but to all other nuclear and non-nuclear states. That will be an important incentive for the demilitarization of politics, modes of thinking and international relations in general. And another point: if we start orienting ourselves towards a "minimal nuclear deterrence" now, I assure you that nuclear weapons will start spreading around the world, devaluing and undermining even what we can achieve at Soviet-American talks and at negotiations among those nuclear states already in existence.

A peaceful future for mankind can be guaranteed not by "nuclear deterrence," but by a balance of reason and good will and by a system of comprehensive security.

Question. The NATO leaders have announced that, even given a balance in the conventional forces in Europe, nuclear weapons will still need to be preserved on the continent as a means of retaliation. If, in keeping with that position, nuclear disarmament is unacceptable to the West, should we not try to reach a joint agreement on the terms of modernization of the tactical nuclear weapons deployed in Europe?

Answer. To talk of nuclear weapons on the continent as a means of retaliation is to return to the old concept of a "limited" nuclear war in Europe. It absolutely contradicts what I conferred with the U.S. President about back in Geneva – notably, that nuclear war cannot be won and simply must not be allowed to happen. Can you really not see that to put into effect the formula of modernizing tactical nuclear weapons in Europe is fraught with the danger of a nuclear catastrophe in the centre of the continent?

I know of the NATO statements concerning nuclear weapons. But I also know that people are thinking not only at NATO headquarters, but also in public, scientific and government circles. There are already a number of ideas which have authoritative supporters both in the East and West of Europe – on ways of reducing conventional armaments, including dual-purpose systems, from the Atlantic to the Urals. We support the idea of nuclear-free zones in Northern Europe and the Balkans. We are also in favour of a 300-kilometre corridor free of all nuclear and any heavy weapons in Central Europe. I am naming just some ideas, but certainly not all.

I am positive that it is here, in such intermediate projects, that we should seek ways of removing the threat of nuclear war, instead of clinging to nuclear weapons, which do not lead to genuine security no matter in what form you have it. The ideas that you mention in your question are self-delusion.

As for "deterrence", isn't awareness of the very fact that a strike at nuclear power stations and chemical plants even with conventional weapons would be lethal for densely-populated Europe enough of a deterrent to war?

Question. NATO suggested to the Warsaw Treaty Organization a cutback of tens of thousands of non-nuclear weapons that could be used for surprise or large-scale offensive operations. Does this approach come within the confines of your stated willingness to negotiate on the basis of asymmetrical reductions?

Answer. On our side, there are no obstacles to that. As for the existing asymmetries in the arsenals of NATO and the Warsaw Treaty, I have already expressed my views on that score many times: asymmetries exist on both sides. We favour eliminating the asymmetry on the basis of reciprocity. For example, the Warsaw Treaty armies have more tanks. And the NATO armies have more attack planes. The Soviet Union and our allies are ready to eliminate these and other asymmetries without delay but, let me repeat, on the basis of reciprocity. And then it would be possible to balance armaments at the lowest possible level sufficient only for defence.

We are not satisfied with the pace of the Vienna consultations of the 23 countries elaborating the recommendations for the future conference. If the work in Vienna proceeds in the same on-and-off manner, Europe will have to wait a long time before those asymmetries are eliminated.

Quite possibly – I would even say certainly – there

are people whom such a situation suits just fine. But I believe that they will be unable to adhere to their positions for long. Quarters which realize that the issue of the dangerous confrontation of armed forces on the European continent should be resolved are becoming stronger.

Question. In the remaining months of the Reagan presidency, what is required to expand your personal relationship with the President into an intergovernment relationship and carry it into the future?

Answer. The experience of present-day international relations shows the paramount importance of meetings between leaders of states; all the more so, when the case in point is the United States and the Soviet Union. Since both countries are well aware of the need to intensify the dialogue and improve relations, it is absolutely obvious that it is not just the leaders' personal views that matter. This is the imperative of our time. This is the striving of our peoples. Such is the constant in the Soviet-American dialogue. It remains intact. And if we add to that the experience we have accumulated, all these factors taken together give rise to hopes of continuity and even of intensified contacts and improved mutual understanding. However, let me repeat that everything rests on the interests of our countries and peoples, not on the sentiments of individual political figures or their personal motives. No one can allow relations to slide to a point beyond which the unpredictable may happen. Such is the basis for continuing and developing the Soviet-American dialogue. It will remain the same in the future as well.

In short, we are interested in developing the dialogue, and we will strive to make it more productive and try to facilitate the "adaptation" of the next U.S. administration to contacts with us, and do everything in our power to keep the process started in Geneva in 1985 going. And, naturally enough, we hope for the same attitude on the American side.

Question. Do you feel President Reagan is a different kind of American leader? Which of his qualities and/or ideas would you most hope to see his successor hold as well? Has he been able to persuade you that the military-industrial complex does not determine U.S. policy?

Answer. As is known, I made President Reagan's acquaintance in Geneva less than three years ago. We have maintained contacts in various forms ever since. There have been three one-to-one meetings. The fourth is approaching.

I'm not particularly fond of giving personal character references. But since you ask, I would like to say that realism is an important quality in President Reagan as a politician. By this I mean the ability to adapt one's stance with regard to the changing situation, while remaining faithful to one's convictions.

Who would have thought in the early 1980s, both in the Soviet Union and the U.S.A., that it would be President Reagan who would sign with us the first nuclear arms reduction agreement in history? However, the sober realization that the world has changed and that the interests of our countries are changing enabled the President to take a fresh look at existing realities, while holding to his well-known convictions. And don't the leaders of such powers as the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., which bear a unique responsibility for the destiny of the modern world, really need such qualities as the ability to give up dogmas and discard outdated ideas for the sake of making progress? For the goal in question is most noble – ridding our peoples and all humanity of the nuclear nightmare, building new relations and improving the international situation.

As for the military-industrial complex, let me remind you that it wasn't us, but a predecessor of the current president, Dwight Eisenhower, also a Republican, who came up with that notion.

It seems unlikely that he could have been wrong. But is that complex the only force shaping American policy? Hardly so, although, let me repeat, its influence is substantial. And it makes itself felt especially obviously and candidly whenever there are signs of positive change in the disarmament sphere, whenever there are prospects of reaching agreements in that field, and whenever Congress is about to consider military budgets and other allocations for armaments.

But, to quote the ancient Greek philosophers, everything is in a state of flux, nothing stays still. If the process of disarmament proceeds actively, if corporations receive fewer military-related orders and if the U.S. stops wielding the "big stick" every time something happens tens of thousands of kilometres away from its shores, something pictured as a threat to America's national interests – then we will be able to discuss that matter again.

Question. The Americans are familiar with the rapid erosion that occurred in the situation in Vietnam once they decided to withdraw from that war. What changes, in your view, will take place in Afghanistan over the next twelve months while the Soviet Union is pulling out its troops? What will the Soviet Union's contribution to bringing about those changes be?

Answer. Any parallel between Vietnam and Afghanistan is artificial. Not to mention how different the nature of the conflicts is. I would only like to remind you of the fact that prior to the Americans pulling out of Vietnam, that country was divided for 20 years into two almost equal parts by a border along the 17th parallel. In both sections, there existed governments personifying regimes opposite in nature and incompatible in aim.

There is nothing of the kind in Afghanistan. On the contrary, the government there has set itself the goal of achieving the Afghan people's national reconciliation and, on this basis, its own reorganization into a coalition government with the participation of all parties to the conflict.

It goes without saying that the future depends in many respects on how honestly and consistently all the signatories to the Geneva agreements meet the commitments assumed, without trying to circumvent them in some way or other or deceive their partners.

I can reaffirm once again that the Soviet Union intends to meet its obligations precisely and undeviatingly.

It is the Afghans themselves who are going to have to decide how the settlement will proceed and what changes are to take place in Afghanistan in the future. We adhere firmly to this principle, which means non-interference in internal affairs. The Soviet Union will render assistance to Afghanistan in dealing with the consequences of the war and strengthening the Afghan economy. In short, it will act in keeping with the long-standing traditions of goodneighbourliness and friendship with this southern neighbour of ours, and will certainly respect its status as an independent, neutral and non-aligned state.

Question. You said that when the Afghan knot is untied, it will have the most profound impact on other regional conflicts too. Is the Soviet Union prepared to cooperate with the United States and other countries in resolving other conflicts, for example, in Central America, the Persian Gulf and Angola?

Answer. Yes, it is prepared to do so. I have already said that, given constructive cooperation between the Soviet Union and the United States, and proper use of the prestige and possibilities of the United Nations, its Security Council and other bodies, the political settlement of regional conflicts and the prevention of new ones will gradually become an international practice, a norm. I would like to confirm this conviction of mine.

The world has ample proof that protracted conflicts are the result of politics being exposed to pressure from outdated stereotypes. These are: orthodox approaches to national security, with power politics being preferred to sober considerations and political boldness; the old habit of seeking to satisfy one's rights and interests at other people's expense; and a dearth of justice and humanity in international relations.

The President and I have discussed this more than once and we will have a chance to take up these matters at the forthcoming meeting as well. Of course, such a talk can only be productive if there is respect for the right of every people to choose its own path of developoment.

Question. Recalling her talks with you, Mrs Thatcher drew a comparison between the criticism and resistance a Western leader faces in bringing about change and what you have encountered in pushing perestroika and glasnost. She wished you success. Is the comparison accurate?

Now, by glasnost you seem to mean something quite different from what we think of as freedom of speech. Could you elaborate on the differences?

Answer. I appreciate the kind words Mrs Thatcher occasionally addresses to us. However, I cannot help but say that I disagree with her views on ways of preserving peace, her dedication to nuclear deterrence and her assessments of socialism.

As for the similarities and dissimilarities between the economic policies of this country and the West, of course, it is possible to find a resemblance, at least a formal one, in anything, and such a resemblance does exist if you do not go into the essence of one reform or another. However, it is the difference of principle that matters. What is taking place in the U.S.S.R. is an all-embracing process of revolutionary renewal of our socialist society on the basis of the historic choice which we do not question and which 70 years ago proved in principle the only correct one for our people. Otherwise the country with which you are discussing things that affect the future of the world as a whole would not exist. Of course, combating stagnation in the course of perestroika and dismantling the mechanism of retardation require that sluggishness and conservatism be overcome. Sometimes we are confronted with hectic impatience. There is also conscious resistance on the part of those whose narrow selfish interests are incompatible with perestroika, whether socially, economically or morally.

However, this is precisely what we mean by perestroika, in the course of which we want to renovate our society, upgrade it in terms of quality. Perestroika is proceeding in both breadth and depth, encompassing all public groups and all our territory. Perestroika is growing and gaining in momentum.

As for glasnost, it and freedom of speech are, of course, related. However, they are not identical. I would put it this way: while freedom of speech is indispensable for glasnost, we see glasnost as a broader phenomenon. For us it is not just the right of every citizen to say openly what he or she thinks about all social and political questions, but also the duty of the ruling party and all bodies of authority and administration to ensure openness in decision-making, be accountable for their actions, act on criticism, and consider advice and recommendations from the shop floor, public organizations and individuals.

We expect glasnost to create a climate allowing citizens to participate effectively in discussing all the country's affairs, in elaborating and making decisions that affect the interests of all of us and in monitoring the implementation of these decisions.

Question. Could you discuss what ideas from abroad have influenced the formation of your political and economic thinking and your mode of action? Conversely, what is the effect of glasnost and perestroika on other socialist countries?

Answer. In my book on perestroika published by Harper and Row, I wrote that our new political thinking is a result of our comprehension of the realities of the nuclear age and the fruit of deep and critical reflections on the past and present of our own country and of the surrounding world.

The new thinking took into account and absorbed the conclusions and demands of the non-aligned movement, of the general public and the scientific community, of physicians', scientists' and ecologists' movements, and of various anti-war organizations. We also take into consideration the experience of other socialist countries, just as they do ours. The process of mutual enrichment with experience, in which no one tries to impose any models on others, is under way.

Yes, all of us really do understand our dependence on one another better and feel that we live in an interrelated world and that all of us are inseparable parts of our single present-day civilization.

Question. Judging from the President's statements, you disagree with him on human rights. At the same time, your dramatic decision to free Andrei Sakharov and ease the conditions of emigration for some Soviet Jews who desire to live abroad have attracted attention around the world. What further steps do you plan in this direction?

Answer. Our perestroika, the main factor of which is creative effort, also includes doing away with all the deformations of the past years, with everything that hampers the manifestation of the humanitarian essence of socialism.

We know our problems and speak honestly and openly about them. The process of democratization does not bypass the sphere of human rights and liberties. We are enhancing the political and public status of the individual. Many issues have already been resolved within the framework of the democratic process, while others will be resolved as Soviet society changes qualitatively in the course of perestroika. But that is our job. We are resolving these issues not because we want to pander to or please somebody, but because this meets the interests of our society, because perestroika cannot be carried out without it, and last but not least, because it is desired by the Soviet people, who have long outgrown the restrictions which they put up with in the past and which were to a certain extent an inevitable part of the unique revolutionary process that we have gone through.

Once I said, I think, to an American: please, show me a country that has no problems. Each country has problems of its own, human rights included. Of course, we are well informed about the situation as to political, social, economic and other rights in the United States. We are well aware of the achievements and problems, but also the flaws in American society. But we do not deem it possible to interfere in your home affairs, though we consider it right to express our views on the processes taking place in American society, on your administration's policy. But we do not want to make all this a reason for confrontation. We consider such an approach to be correct and fair; we see it as meeting the interests of Soviet-American relations and their future. I want to emphasize once again that we do not try to impose anything on the United States, but at the same time we will not tolerate attempts by any side to meddle in our affairs, no matter who tries to do so in your country.

Such is, in principle, our approach. At the same time, there are problems in the human rights sphere that require joint consideration. The mechanism of cooperation in that area has recently begun to take shape. Scientists, specialists and public representatives have been widely drawn into it. Specific issues are analyzed at their meetings in a calm atmosphere and a businesslike manner.

We also welcome the accord on setting up a permanent body on human rights with the participation of deputies to the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet and U.S. Congressmen. It is the duty of legislators in both countries to show concern for the observance of citizens' rights. We are prepared to go on acting in this spirit.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, I would like to say the following. It seems to me that pragmatism, preparedness to seek new decisions if what has been tested does not work is the Americans' forte. But they also have a trait – please, do not resent my frankness – which sometimes makes it difficult to deal with them. I mean their confidence that everything American is best, while what others have is at least worse if not altogether bad and unfit for use. I am not talking about anti-communism, which has been implanted in the U.S.A. for decades, despite the fact that many years ago Albert Einstein called it the greatest lie of the 20th century.

For the sake of our mutual understanding, please do not try to teach us to live according to American rules – it is altogether useless. And I repeat that, for our part, we do not intend to propose our values to the Americans.

Let each side live in its own way, respecting each other's choice and voluntarily exchanging the fruits of our labour in all spheres of human activity.

I am sure that any nation, any people does not lose out but, on the contrary, wins, if it looks at itself critically and does not ignore the experience of others, if it is prepared to understand and respect a different culture, a different way of thinking, different customs and, lastly, a different political system, if, of course, it is not terrorist, fascist or dictatorial.

Question. Does your policy of perestroika require fundamental changes in the way relations between Soviet nationalities are arranged? Does this policy offer new ways of answering the interests of cultural diversity and internationalism?

Answer. We do not propose to change the socialist priciples of relations between the different national groups, big and small, in our country. But we will set right the violations of these principles. It is such violations that caused the recent developments in some of our republics. The West has displayed, I would say, a morbid interest in them, not infrequently with anti-Soviet innuendo and bad intentions. It made lavish use of speculation aimed at weakening our multinational Union.

Problems certainly do exist, and they are linked with the legacy we inherited from the time of the personality cult and the period of stagnation – in the economy, social policy, cultural life and human relations. Internationalism, which is deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of Soviet people of all nationalities, will help us resolve problems in this sphere, too. And we will resolve them in the spirit of perestroika, and in conjunction with the achievement of all the major tasks entailed in the process of the radical renewal of our society.

As already reported Mikhail Gorbachev received publishers of the newspaper Washington Post and magazine Newsweek for a talk.

Mikhail Gorbachev: I'm glad to greet you here in Moscow on the eve of the summit. What is the mood in Washington?

Katharine Graham: Everyone's preparing for the

summit. Thousands of people are to come here in connection with this event. Everyone has great hopes and expectations.

M. Gorbachev: Moscow, too, is looking forward to the summit. That's good. It's good that having been started, the cause is continuing. The Soviet-American dialogue may have its ups and downs, it may have its evolution, but there's no doubt that now that it's under way it promises concrete results in the development of our relations. I stated this in the written answers to your questions which have been handed over to you. We deeply appreciate the very fact of constant Soviet-American dialogue. Contacts with the U.S. in different fields – political, scientific, technical, economic and cultural – are diverse. And yet they cannot replace summit meetings.

To this I can add and inform you that Moscow, too, is living in an atmosphere of preparation for a visit by Ronald Reagan, the first U.S.President to come over in 14 years.

K. Graham: I would like to note that, together with President Reagan and George Shultz and Eduard Shevardnadze, you have created a new mechanism of fruitful discussions, something that was previously lacking.

M. Gorbachev: I think that is really an important result of our joint work over the past few years. Of course, I rate highly specific agreements reached during these discussions, especially the INF treaty. And yet I believe that the most important political achievement is regular and systematic dialogue.

Well, it sounds as if I'm beginning to question you..., to seize the initiative. But then I've already answered your written questions. Now we can just talk.

K. Graham: To begin with, I would like to thank you for your answers to our written questions. They mean a great deal to us and we are grateful to you for this and for the sincerity of your answers. Of course, in this conversation we would like to discuss a great many things.

Preparing for this meeting, we talked with a large number of people and virtually everywhere we were told how many problems you are confronted with and how hard it will be to solve them. Many are simply awed by the boldness of your plans. May I ask you if you ever experience moments of doubt, when an objective seems incredibly complex and even unrealizable? Do you experience moments of hesitation?

Why do you think your programme of reforms cannot but be crowned with success, whereas the programmes of such of your predecessors as Nikita Khrushchev failed?

M. Gorbachev: Well, you've asked perhaps the most important question which is worrying our people and, I think, the Americans, on account of the fact that, one way or another, whether we like it or not, it is the destiny of our two peoples and our two countries to cooperate and learn to live together. And this, naturally, implies knowing each other, and, particularly, knowing each other's plans. They really are very ambitious. It is for this reason that our perestroika is being called revolutionary.

Paradoxical as it may seem, although the difficulties have multiplied, I feel more confident that we've chosen the right political course towards perestroika and the renewal of our society. How can I explain this? Probably we now know better what we want and how to reach it, and this gives us greater confidence.

In the Party Central Committee we'll discuss the document for the coming 19th Party conference. I can tell you that it will give a second wind to our plans and our work to implement the concept of perestroika.

I might appear over-confident if I say only what I've said. Taking decisions at this turning-point in the development of our society involves tremendous responsibility to our people especially. Perhaps we're not guaranteed against mistakes, but we'd like them to be few, at least not to have big mistakes, because political mistakes are the worst. We'd like to fend them off. We are therefore making all our main decisions of principle with the active participation of the whole of society and its intellectual forces, within the framework of the democratic process. This is the best way of avoiding political mistakes. This is why we are developing the processes of democratization and openness so persistently. We won't backtrack. It is perhaps in this area that perestroika has made the greatest strides.

I've approached now the second part of your question. Indeed, earlier, too, our society and Party understood the need for reforms and renewal. Attempts to implement such reforms were made on a very large scale, including, as you said, by Nikita Khrushchev and the leadership he headed. I think that in the times of Leonid Brezhnev the leadership also conceived and launched big plans. But they were not completed, mostly because they were not based on the decisive force – drawing people into the modernization and restructuring of society. We've learnt a lesson from our history and this is why we are developing democratization with so much persistence.

The now popular expression "more democracy – more socialism" is more than a beautiful slogan. It is a thoughtful guideline: through developing the democratic process, through involving people in economic, political, social and cultural reforms, to discover the potential of socialism and all that is contained in this system.

Now that we have behind us three years and the experience of perestroika, of our work at the new stage, we can say with confidence that perestroika has become a cause of the entire people, the entire nation.

Many generations, my generation certainly, may not have witnessed, may not remember such activity and interest in the affairs of society as we're observing now. People are eagerly discussing the activities of Party, state and economic bodies, and all current developments. Tremendous interest is being shown in everything taking place in our country. This is evidence of stagnation and apathy being overcome. Our life is tempestuous. It's no easy job to steer the ship in this turbulent sea. But we have the compass and the crew, and our ship is strong enough.

Jim Hoagland: I'd like to ask you a number of more

specific questions on perestroika. You said that the present time is turbulent and that there are more difficulties than earlier in certain fields. I think a price reform is called for as an extremely important component of perestroika. The system of subsidies operating in your country is part of the old social contract between the people and the government. Which means that every Soviet citizen receives a three-ruble subsidy for every kilogram of meat and a 30-kopeck subsidy for every litre of milk he buys. Do you believe that this system, so costly for the nation, needs to be changed? If you do believe so, how urgent is this task and how will it be carried out?

M. Gorbachev: We're examining this problem, not just in government circles but in society. Those who live in Moscow can confirm that our press is already running a discussion of these issues. The discussion involves ordinary citizens, industrial workers, collective farmers, intellectuals, veterans, and experts. The problem concerns the whole of society.

Prices and price formation play a rather important role, to put it more precisely, in the package of measures constituting a radical economic reform. When I speak of prices, I mean wholesale, purchase and retail prices. We want the new five-year plan to be based on these new prices.

How should we approach them in essence? The standpoint on this score has already taken shape in both government and scientific quarters. We've already set it forth to the people before. While reforming prices and changing the price formation system we see to it, above all, that there is no decline in real living standards.

You may ask what the aim of all this is. The aim is to make prices correspond to real economic processes and reflect real expenses and work input. This will make it possible to reorganize the entire financial system and on this basis develop cost accounting more successfully, use in all work collectives material incentives which is to move the economy in the right direction, towards greater scientific and technological progress and higher labour productivity, and search for ways of better meeting society's needs for means of production, commodities, and higher-quality services.

Today we're very carefully considering ways of compensating for the losses that might be caused by the introduction of new prices, by which I mean retail prices. When we're ready for this and when the measures have been properly thought-out and weighed comprehensively, we'll submit them for nationwide discussion. We've promised this to the people and we shall act accordingly. We shall do nothing without the people's consent.

J. Hoagland: We've just seen that price reform gives birth to civil unrest and serious problems in neighbouring socialist Poland. Do you suppose that you'll be able to avoid similar stormy events?

M. Gorbachev: The situation is different here. Our situation is characterized by the fact that the great mass of prices is under strict state control.

It is therefore very important to find the way that enables us to combine the release of the required economic mechanisms with the preservation of the necessary centralized control. I do not think this issue can be solved at one go. The shaping of a new price mechanism will be a process that will evolve within the framework of economic reform.

We are being urged from the inside and from the outside towards steps which would be tantamount to a leap. But we will act in a considered and prudent way, and will continuously seek counsel from the people via the democratic mechanism.

Anyway, I believe that after this answer Washington Post will stop advising us to take reckless steps to accelerate perestroika. **(Laughter).**

Meg Greenfield: Mr Gorbachev, I would like to ask you a question concerning perestroika in another sphere. You have written of perestroika in international relations, and particularly in relations between socialist countries.

You wrote very vividly that every country must exercise an absolute right to choose its own course of development: capitalism, socialism or some other variant of either course. I would like to ask how and to what extent this can be applied to the East European socialist countries? For instance, there are elements in Poland that are calling for a pluralistic system in which the Communist Party would not perhaps play the leading role. To what degree is that acceptable? To what extent would you be able to tolerate that?

M. Gorbachev: I think you would do better to ask the Polish leadership about that. That would also correspond to the point of departure of your question. But still, I would like to say a few words.

We recognize the right of each people, wherever in the world it lives, to social choice and the choice of ways of improving its life. I think the Polish people can now see better what should be done for Poland to strengthen and consolidate so that its development bears fruit for the people.

Whatever we do in our country is our own affair. Perestroika was brought about by our conditions. We need it. We will continue to expand and deepen it. But we are not imposing our methods for developing and improving society on anybody. That is everyone's own affair. I think the Poles will also see what they should do for Poland's development. I am sure that the bulk of people, the overwhelming majority of Poles, are for the road they chose after the war.

M. Greenfield: I would like in this connection to refer to one of your Belgrade statements. You said there that there are no circumstances under which interference by force in another country's affairs should occur, and under which such interference would be admissible. Does this mean that, as we see it in the West, a situation similar to that, say, in 1956 in Hungary or in 1968 in Czechoslovakia could not occur again, and is such an interpretation correct?

M. Gorbachev: Yes, I did speak out on that subject in Yugoslavia. I can only reiterate what I said then, and generally speaking, there is nothing I would add to that. I would only note the following, perhaps: interference

from any side is inadmissible. When you speak of interference, I can see what you mean. But recalling those situations, I also have in mind something else, and here it is: before what you said occurred, there had been interference of a different kind.

Look how much time has passed since the war, yet the parliaments and bodies like them in some Western capitals adopt resolutions which can be regarded only as interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

The world has dramatically changed in the postwar decades, and today even the smallest nation will not tolerate interference and commands from anybody. Our relations with the socialist countries are equal relations of independent states, relations of cooperation and mutual assistance. We share many things, including resources, and depend on each other in the sense that our cooperation allows and allowed us in the past to build up the economy of each country and carry out major social changes.

I believe such cooperation to be a good basis, and that it will also play a positive role at the new stage when profound changes in the socialist countries are under way.

Richard Smith: I would like to know your personal reaction to some specific proposals which are being advanced on the threshold of the Party conference. Specifically, do you support the proposal to limit the term of office for Party leaders and, if you do, does this apply to the post of General Secretary?

M. Gorbachev: You will receive answers to these questions in the next few days. For the time being, I would answer in one word – yes.

R. Smith: Still, we hope that you will say more...

M. Gorbachev: I would not like to anticipate what you will read in... What day is it now? Is it the eighteenth of May? In five or six days. Washington Post always wants to know more and earlier than others. **(Animation).**

Someone corrects: "This is Newsweek." **(Laughter).**

M. Gorbachev: It's all the same. It's your empire.

M. Greenfield: There's competition inside our empire, too. **(Animation).**

K. Graham: Mr Gorbachev, from the moment of our arrival here we have seen immense interest in the forthcoming Party conference. Could you just tell us briefly what you expect from this exceptionally important event?

M. Gorbachev: My expectations coincide with the expectations of society as a whole. We want to sum up the results of the last three years and analyze the history of perestroika to date. We want to make a critical analysis of the whole period and draw lessons from it. Perhaps, some corrections will be needed. But the central question is how to move perestroika forward, and how to make it irreversible. That is why the questions of deepening economic reform and democratizing the Party and society will be the principal ones. You will soon learn the rest.

R. Smith asked if the appearance of the articles in the newspapers Sovetskaya Rossia and Pravda does not reflect serious differences in the Soviet leadership.

M. Gorbachev: I have the impression that the theme of serious differences in the Soviet leadership about perestroika and the assessment of the past is prompted by the West, not by Soviet editors. I don't know the motives of those who regularly tout this theme, which is constantly being discussed in foreign radio programmes in Russian and other languages. It may be a desire to understand what's going on in this country or it may be a desire to make capital out of the discussions being conducted here, sow suspicion and provoke a real split in our leadership.

The present leadership, in both the Politburo and the government, was mainly formed after April 1985, when we had already launched the policy of perestroika. All the members of our leadership are deeply committed to the cause of perestroika and actively participate in formulating its policy and carrying it out.

Let's think it over together and the situation may become clearer to you. When people take on a task as ambitious as this one and when they have to formulate not only strategy but also tactics for attaining the goals they have set, can they do so without active debate or dialogue within the leadership and in society as a whole? This is what is happening now. The whole country has become one big debating society. And it is only natural that there should be lively debate in the leadership about ways of answering the questions arising from perestroika.

Only Jesus Christ knew all the answers to all questions and could feed 20,000 Jews with five loaves of bread. We do not possess such miraculous powers and have no ready-made answers to all the problems at hand. We are looking for such answers with the whole of society. And this inevitably leads to discussions and heated debate. This is natural. The trouble is that for many years there was no such debate in society, in the Party, in the Central Committee, in the government or in the Politburo. And that caused many failures, shortcomings and errors. It is a big mistake to picture our current discussions as differences in the leadership. They are the normal democratic process. It is another thing that some people may want there to be differences, divisions and even battles within the Soviet leadership. But this has nothing to do with understanding the real situation within our leadership.

R. Smith: The point is that we have the impression that many of your enthusiastic followers, people who support perestroika, are concerned about a possible political division. There was a letter in the newspaper Sovetskaya Kultura from someone worried that "the Central Committee will hold a plenum and topple Gorbachev" (it's a quote). And he suggested holding a referendum on your leadership and your policy, in which everyone would participate. My question is this: Have you heard about that letter and what do you think of the idea of holding a referendum?

M. Gorbachev: That's not only that letter I've heard about. **(Laughter.)** I believe this to be a good thing. It means that society does care about who is in the country's leadership. It means that people are taking a great interest in what

is happening. I think the fact you have mentioned is an interesting symbol, which also demonstrates the progress perestroika is making. It shows that people have become involved in the political process and are eager to participate in it and have their say. This is wonderful. It may be the main thing that has come with perestroika, because in the economy and the social sphere we still have a lot of work to do. There are improvements there too, but we need time to change things in such a radical way that all of society will feel the change.

As regards the fears you have mentioned, nothing is happening in the Party or in society to justify them.

I don't mean myself, I am talking about the problem in general. And one has to know our political process to realize that if the General Secretary did not have the support of his closest associates and colleagues, nothing would have changed here since April. Everything that has happened in our society, our Party and the Central Committee has happened with the participation of the present leadership.

There is one more thing I want to say. Perestroika is now bringing interesting new people to the surface in all spheres – in the political process, in the economy and in culture. Continued democratization will bring more and more interesting new people with fresh ideas onto the political scene. The aim of perestroika is to create mechanisms that will regulate society and facilitate its self-adjustment within the framework of the democratic process. That will help involve the people and, of course, their finest intellectual forces, able and talented people at all levels and in all echelons, in managing the affairs of society and the state.

Our society will never again be what it was. It is changing. There are mechanisms working for this change. A great deal has to be done, but the train has already started and is gathering speed.

Robert Kaiser: For me, as someone who has lived in Moscow, the most dramatic changes are precisely those in the press and on television. Everything has become so interesting. Many political prisoners have been released, and many former refuseniks have been allowed to leave the U.S.S.R. On May 7 you stated that the goal is to create a socialist law-based state. And you said in your very interesting written answers to our questions that freedom of speech is absolutely essential. Yet at the same time we see that some Soviet citizens find themselves in trouble because, as it seems to us, they simply want to exercise this right, to exercise freedom of speech. I mean Airikyan in Armenia and Grigoryants in Moscow. Why does that happen? Is it because some officials have not yet mastered the new thinking, or because, in your view, what these citizens are doing goes beyond freedom of speech?

M. Gorbachev: An interesting question. I will answer it in brief. The most substantial thing that perestroika has shown is that our people, striving for the renewal of society and for changes, have said in no uncertain terms: only within the framework of socialism and on the basis of its values.

Even such measures in the economy as the development of cooperatives, self-financing, lease contract and individual enterprise were and are discussed very seriously and scrupulously in our society from the following standpoint: is it not a deviation from socialism? Does not it undermine socialist principles? Today, nine tenths of our country's population was born and raised in the socialist period. And the present leadership is unable to do anything other than develop socialism, which has opened up a great road before us in all spheres of life. We know socialism and its achievements and we know its problems. And we will act within the framework of our socialist choice.

That is why when they try to force other values on us, specifically in the ideological sphere, it brings a critical reaction from the people. But it is also a democratic process. Such is democracy.

Our people know that Grigoryants' "organization" is linked with the West organizationally and financially, and that Western correspondents are his constant visitors and guests. That is why our people regard him as something alien, parasitically feeding on the democratic processes and on perestroika. Alas, that happens sometimes. It also happens in nature: all kinds of parasites attach themselves to a living organism and try to damage it.

Our society is strong enough to cope with this, too. Once I said that the whole of society will be resmelted in the furnace of perestroika. This will make it stronger and open up even further its democratic, humane potential in the interests of man. Our people reject the proposal that we seek alternative prospects elsewhere, for instance, the proposal that we eliminate socialist ownership, etc. This will not be accepted; it is an illusion, and you should be aware of this.

In conclusion I would like to express my satisfaction with our meeting and the hope, a small one **(animation in the hall)** that Washington Post and Newsweek will cover the processes in the Soviet Union on the basis of an objective analysis and a serious and responsible approach. We are not asking for praise, we invite you to try and comprehend the truths born of perestroika. Authoritative publications should do everything professionally.

K. Graham: If you will permit it, we'd like to ask another very important question. A few words, please, about the summit, its content and atmosphere. You said in your written answers that you would welcome another meeting with President Reagan if you could sign an agreement to cut strategic offensive arms by half. Can we take it for granted that the understanding on 50-per cent cuts in strategic offensive arms is vital and close enough to completion to be signed with the ABM and SLCM talks still under way, that is, without waiting until the work on space and SLCM issues is finished?

M. Gorbachev: We are confirmed and principled advocates of resolute cuts in nuclear arsenals, and so we are for the signing of the treaty on 50-per cent cuts in strategic offensive weapons. As we see it, we have travelled a long way together in search of solutions. But what's the point in signing understandings on strategic

offensive arms cuts in one sphere, if there is an arms race in space or at sea? I think you'll agree it's nonsense.

So our persistence isn't a whim, a tactical subterfuge on the part of the Soviet side. It's a responsible, well thought-out attitude. It accords with the interests of the Soviet and American nations, and the whole world. If we were to replace one kind of arms race with another, in space, things would become really dramatic. We'd have undermined emergent confidence, and detracted from what has been achieved in Geneva. What we have here is a new kind of arms race and a new dimension to it. We'd need new criteria to come close to understandings and arrive at agreements. And that would take us decades.

As I see it, those who encourage an arms race in space are committing a crime against their own and other nations. That has to be said with full clarity and responsibility. Such an approach and such thinking lead to destabilization and to unpredictable developments in security issues. The advocates of that approach deserve to be pilloried.

To leave sea-launched cruise missiles without limitations and beyond control would be another manoeuvre, another channel for the arms race.

So we link all those issues together. I think that's a fair approach. The main thing is that we see ways of solving all those interrelated issues and arriving at a treaty on 50-per cent cuts in strategic offensive weapons. Then we can proceed further.

K. Graham: I asked because, to my mind, both sides have made enough headway towards an understanding. Now, take the SDI and ABM issue. As we see it, the Washington Declaration brings us close enough to the main question: What will happen when the period of non-withdrawal from the ABM Treaty is over? Do you think the Joint Washington Statement offers a solution even now?

M. Gorbachev: I think what the statement says on understanding the ABM Treaty as it was adopted in 1972 and as both sides understood it before 1983 gives a basis for progress towards an agreement on 50-per cent strategic offensive weapon cuts. But only that way.

I still have to answer another part of your question. We will work together with any U.S. administration in that crucial field of Soviet-American relations. We shall seek ways of making new nuclear arms cuts in the framework of the Geneva process. We'll be glad if it happens during Mr Reagan's presidency. If it happens under a new president, we aren't going to mark time either. We shall work on. It's all up to the U.S. side.

I'm going to talk to the President about cooperation in Mars missions.

Mikhail Gorbachev invites everybody to look at pictures of the launch. He continues:

This is a mock-up of our Energia rocket. Last year it placed a 100-ton load in orbit. With some improvements, the rocket will be capable of carrying 200 tons. Here's a picture of it taking off. I received it from Baikonur, which I visited last year. I will suggest to the President cooperation in organizing a joint flight to Mars. The results expected to be produced by the SDI and ABM programmes can very well be achieved through peaceful projects for the development of space. For instance, the implementation of the project for a flight to Halley's Comet provided us with a great deal of new material and numerous scientific results in such areas as electronics, mathematics and so on.

This is an area for work and cooperation worthy of the American and Soviet people. I will suggest to the President...

J. Hoagland: As you probably know, we have published an article by Academician Sagdeyev on this issue.

M. Gorbachev: How interesting! Is it about Halley's Comet?

J. Hoagland: About a joint flight to Mars. It is proposed to send an automatic station. As we see it, the flight could be feasible.

M. Gorbachev: That would be a tremendous breakthrough in science, technology and engineering. In the meantime, you can see what we have been doing... I am very glad to have met you.

K. Graham and the others thank Mikhail Gorbachev for the conversation and the interview.

PRIVATE OPINION

HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

ALEXANDER BARANOV, Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya

The plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, which has just ended, discussed and adopted the Theses for the 19th National Party Conference. This document gives a serious analysis to perestroika, to the programme for the democratization of society. In turn, this programme will call for a radical change in the style of work of many of our Party and government bodies. What does the omnipotence of the Soviets mean, for instance? It means relieving them of petty tutelage and giving them full control over the industrial facilities and natural resources of their respective regions. The Party bodies are to forgo their economic functions and concentrate on the political education of Communists at all social institutions, right up to the work collective council. This means a change in the relationships not only between the highest government echelons and production plants – which has already occurred – but also between Party and government bodies.

The atmosphere at the plenary meeting was democratic and unprecedentedly frank. Many spoke impromptu, and almost every speech was entirely free of once common clichés and empty rhetoric. The constructive and lucid ideas expressed at the meeting reflected profound changes in our very mentality.

However, a great deal of work has still to be done. We have yet to appreciate the measure of the unprecedented social process now underway in the country. The press is to play an important role in this.

Significantly, the number of public-spirited letters in our mail is now out of all proportion to those asking for various personal favours. More and more readers are displaying a high sense of civic duty, which augurs well for perestroika.

KENNETH DAVID KAUNDA, Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, President of Zambia

The coming into force of the Geneva accords on the settlement in Afganistan has a double effect. First, it paves the way for an end to bloodshed on Afghan soil and, second, it sets a good example of how regional conflicts should be resolved.

We in Africa welcome the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. We are certain that this has been possible largely thanks to the constructive and honest position of the Soviet Union, to Moscow's new political thinking. I think this view is shared by such outstanding African statesmen as Robert Mugabe, Julius Nyerere and others.

I make no secret of my admiration of Mikhail Gorbachev's activity. In my country's parliament and at international level I have repeatedly called on the Western countries to give the Soviet leader a chance to meet the challenge of the times, and I repeat this call over and over again. At the same time, I urgently request Mikhail Gorbachev to carry on confidently and without hesitation, his bold policy aimed at relaxing international tension and establishing new and just international relations.

In the south of Africa, where the bloody expansion of the Pretoria racist regime continues, the need for new thinking to prevail on the political scene, and in the world at large, is especially manifest.

HELMUT SCHMIDT, ex-Chancellor of the F.R.G. and Chairman of the InterAction Council

The decision of the InterAction Council – the independent international organization which unites former heads of state and government – to hold their sixth session in Moscow has come from the impression that Moscow is one of the most interesting world capitals. We are grateful to the Soviet government for the opportunity it has granted us to do so.

We have been trying to understand what chances glasnost stands, what the essence of perestroika is, how long it will take to produce the first results, and what the latter will mean to the rest of the world. The InterAction Council is unanimous in that if perestroika in the U.S.S.R. fails, it will be a great tragedy to the whole world. Its negative consequences, if any, will tell on many countries.

Speaking of the recent session held under the motto "Preparing for the next century," we have done good work there. What we have in common is a profound realization of the fact that by force of the experience we have gained during our political careers, and owing to our present detachment from day-to-day political leadership, we are in a position to give advice to others. As one mingles with friends, one gets an enormous amount of information. Although we do not undertake executive functions, some of us have influence on governments, and others command prestige in their respective countries.

What we expect

What can we expect from the fourth Soviet-American summit? The road to Moscow lay through Geneva, Reykjavik, Washington. What was it like? What were the obstacles on the way? These questions are of concern to many people. They were also in the focus at the sixth session of the international organization uniting former heads of state and government just over in Moscow. Below some of the prominent Soviet and foreign politicians, scientists and journalists share their views of what lies ahead with a New Times correspondent.

Valentin Falin,
Chairman of the Board of the Novosti Press Agency

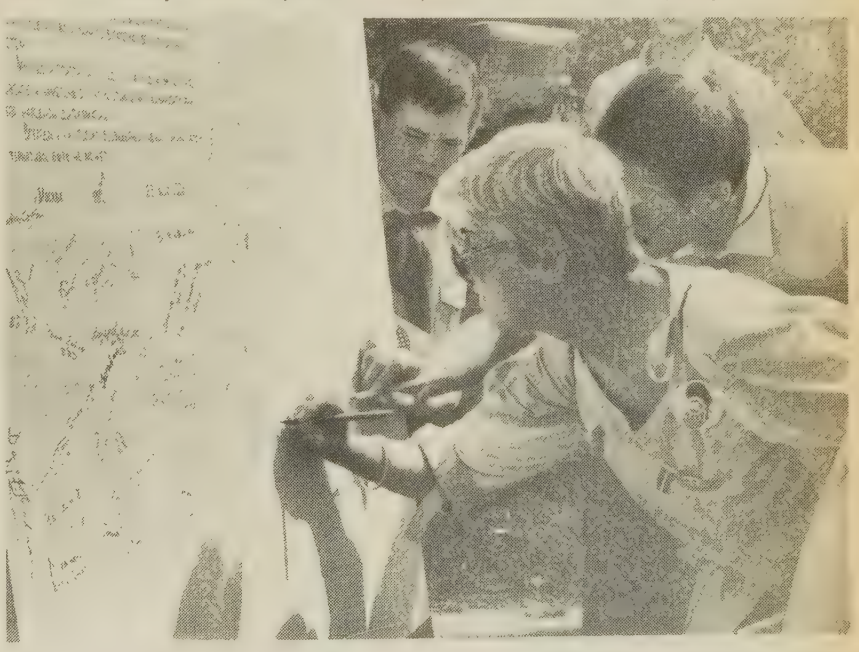
Progress in politics is measured and will always be measured by actions. Actions that leap to the eyes of everyone, and actions that are noticeable only to the initiated. Actions concerning concrete, tangible things, as in the case of medium- and shorter-range missiles, which can be counted, tied down to a definite place, and are subject to verification both with the eye and with instruments. Actions reflected in mutual restraint, or efforts that remove irritants and misunderstandings, and prompt the sides to get down to resolving major problems. Not just hoping for success, but firmly convinced that it is necessary.

In other words, the concept of actions is sufficiently broad. Sometimes, and not so infrequently, it defies strict formalization. A kind word could in itself become an action. On the other hand, not every action is worthy even of condemnation.

So, if one looks at the road from Geneva, 1985, to Moscow, 1988, from approximately that angle, what has this period of just under 30 months been notable for? One parallel suggests itself, and not purely from geographical associations. When it comes to the difficulties that have had to be overcome, the hair-raising, icy, almost vertical heights that have had to be scaled, the battle for a non-nuclear world can justly be compared with A.V. Suvorov's crossing the Alps. With one difference – there are many more bottomless ravines and Devil's Bridges in our times.

Where did this latest attempt to extricate Soviet-American relations from the labyrinth of a confrontation of strength begin? To place them at least on the narrow path of joint efforts, knowing in advance that in places that path would be too narrow for them to walk side by side, and first one then the other would have to give way to his partner. To say that it started from scratch would be to make things look better than they were. Because in reality the temperature of Soviet-American relations was sub-zero. That too should be borne in mind when summing up the job done, and evaluating its political, material and moral significance.

What in the past, in my view, marks the profound trend in the development of Soviet-American relations and its main features, and what do they mean for all of civilization? The very first meeting between the General Secretary of the CC CPSU Mikhail Gorbachev and U.S. President Ronald Reagan presupposed that it should be accepted from the outset that common sense should have precedence over force, that the problem of security is becoming more of a political than a military problem, and that therefore the way out of the unsatisfactory situation that had by that time developed in the world should be sought not by either side imposing its view on the other, but in an honest dialogue and sensible compromise based on a balance of interests. That was the foundation on which the joint rejection of nuclear war in the Geneva agreement rested, the shared conclusion that in such a war there could be no winner, and the pledge not to seek



An international monitoring centre has been opened at the Soviet Peace Committee on the eve of the summit. People's diplomats from Western Europe, the U.S.A., Canada, New Zealand, Japan and the U.S.S.R. were the first to sign an appeal to the leaders of the two countries. Many of them will be taking part in an international peace cruise along the Dnieper River while the summit is in progress.

Photo by V. Panov

military superiority and work towards a reduction in the level of military confrontation.

It's true that shortly afterwards it became clear that Moscow and Washington were thinking in different scales of time and space. On January 15, 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev put forward his historic proposal for the elimination of nuclear weapons throughout the world by the year 2000, and other radical measures designed to reduce the danger of war and stabilize peace. The U.S.A., for its part, leaned towards measures that mutually excluded each other and were incompatible with the principle of equality and mutual security.

The dramatic meeting in Reykjavik was essential, as were the intensive efforts by Soviet diplomacy after the dialogue in the capital of Iceland, before the talks on medium-range nuclear weapons could take a genuinely constructive course and end with the signing in Washington last December of a corresponding agreement.

Incidentally, it would be no exaggeration to say that the leading architect in the building of the treaty was above all the Soviet Union. Its good will made it possible to put politics and arithmetic in their proper places. In the final count, a window was being cut through towards nuclear disarmament, and each of the partners provided evidence of the place this task held in their long-term concepts.

The INF treaty is about to enter into force. Juridically. In actual fact, it is already being implemented. The withdrawal of Soviet operative tactical longer-range missiles from the G.D.R. and Czechoslovakia bears that out. The implementation of the treaty marks the beginning of nuclear disarmament. Now it is important that this impulse should not peter out.

What can one expect from the Moscow summit? The mandate given in Washington to prepare the draft of a treaty on a 50- per cent cut in strategic offensive weapons has not been realized. The material is difficult, and had that been the only reason for not keeping to the schedule, one could have sympathized with the negotiators and wished them redoubled energy to overcome the obstacles. But the objective factors which are usually blamed are only part of the picture. Difficulties are all the harder to eliminate, the less desire there is to do so, and in the past few months the Americans have shown no particular zeal in advancing to the goal. Apparently, at this stage the leaders of the two countries will confine themselves to stating what has been achieved, so that somewhat later it will be possible to put the pieces together and, after doing some additional work on them, make of them a single whole.

The absence of a completed SOA agreement on the negotiating table in Moscow does not reduce the significance of the summit itself. The Soviet and the American leaders have a long agenda before them and each item on it is in itself of primary significance; and not just because there are no minor details in relations between the U.S.S.R. and U.S.A., but because on practically every issue a new slant has to be found, new unexplored ground have to be broken and positive precedents set. And perhaps what is of paramount importance is that it is essential to impart a forward-looking constructive dynamic to the process, and translate theories into practice: if there must be no wars, then it is imperative to make sure that wars are impossible.

Lord Callaghan,

former Prime Minister of Great Britain (1976-79)

I would certainly expect the INF treaty to be ratified. The difficulties seem to have been overcome there. That will be a very important step taken by the two major leaders in the world.

Certainly I would expect there to be some serious discussion between the two leaders about developments in the world, and especially in relation to the next step in the arms reduction programme, namely the START talks.

But I don't think we should necessarily expect too much more. You see, the world has got into the habit of believing that when world leaders meet there must be some important decision. But we have to remember world problems are very complex. They do have to be worked out very thoroughly. First professionals, specialists, experts have to work hard to prepare a package. And the public has to accept its aims. Then the statesmen have the final say.

And there is no doubt that the agreement on START will present great problems. Not problems that are caused by hostility, but by the nature of the weapons themselves. And, of course, by the necessity for each side to be certain that the agreement may be carried out. There is still the problem of trust between the superpowers. It is still a delicate flower that must be allowed to grow and develop. Until that happens, the problems of verification are going to be extremely important.

There is also a second problem, namely, how to agree on a balance of forces – a balance for both sides...

It is not a question of ill-will. It is a question of practical cooperation, ensuring that each side feels as secure after it signs an agreement as it felt before it signed.

So I've always thought it unrealistic to expect an agreement to be made in such a short time as between the INF conclusion and the present meeting...

There is no doubt that personal relations between world statesmen are very important. You get to know how the other man thinks, what are his preoccupations and his concerns. They are not a substitute, however, for national interests. Personal relations between statesmen cannot carry the burden of national interests which are lasting, they remain irrespective of the passage of leaders. Contacts between leaders are important because we can build up a network of relations between various groups in each country who are concerned with particular problems, so that, even a change of leadership in any of the great countries will not necessarily affect policy so much...

It would be a great disappointment to us, for example, if there were to be a change in the Soviet Union. Because we think that what is happening is in the best interests of the Soviet people and the best interests of world peace... Or indeed if an election in the United States were to change dramatically the country's policy. That could set back the progress that has been made on the road to détente... I'm optimistic about détente...

William Rogers,

former U.S. Secretary of State (1969-73)

We sincerely hope that the INF treaty will be ratified by the time President Reagan arrives here so that it will become effective. So I think all Americans are very hopeful and very optimistic about our relations. We in the United States have been very pleased at Gorbachev's policy of glasnost and your plans to restructure your government (perestroika) and I think it's good, for it will increase the possibilities for developing our relations.

Alexander Bovin,

political observer of the newspaper Izvestia

The process of improving relations between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. has proceeded with some zig-zags, local breakdowns and backtracking. It has taken place at different levels: political leaders, the military – and jumping a few echelons – the ordinary people taking part in the already customary TV bridges have learnt to talk to each other, understand each other. And here is something else we have learnt: we, to look at the world through American eyes, and they to look at it as we see it. A hard task. But without having learnt that, it is hardly possible to pinpoint the areas where our interests intersect, where compromises are possible. And compromise, as you know, is the

very air without which politics begin to suffocate.

I would name inertia, suspicion, mistrust and hostility as the springs of the braking mechanism.

What do I expect from the summit? Concretely, nothing special. What I am looking forward to is not the exchange of signatures, although a number of documents will be signed, but above all an exchange of views.

As I see it, informal meetings, meetings designed not for the signing of documents, but for free discussion, for the airing of mutual claims, the elucidation of positions, should gradually come to take a bigger place in diplomatic practice – both at the very highest level, and lower down.

I hope that the talks in Moscow will consolidate what has already been achieved in the sphere of Soviet-American relations, and that new landmarks for fresh steps along this path will be indicated.

In the United States, Reagan is sometimes called Roosevelt the other way round. Well, with the real Roosevelt we won the war. And with this "other way round" one we are, it seems, beginning to win the peace. Surprise upon surprise. Truly we live in a time of paradoxes.

Andries van Agt,

former Prime Minister of the Netherlands (1977-82)

The world now has to swallow some disappointment at the fact that the two super powers have not been able to conclude a new agreement on strategic nuclear arms. Too many people had hoped that the process of détente was going so far, so quickly that we would be able to reach an agreement on nuclear arms as well within, say, half a year. That has turned out to be impossible, and what matters now is to retain our confidence and conviction that we must keep the dialogue between the two military super powers going.

The United States and the Soviet Union are pursuing their own aims, and each for its own reasons in the need of a sharp reduction of expenditures on armaments and weapons. So the self-interests meet now. I think there is a chance of seizing the opportunity and letting the surrounding world believe and remain convinced that the two super powers are capable of re-arranging their frozen relations. I think the task, the assignment par excellence, for the two world leaders at the forthcoming summit meeting will not be to present spectacular and conspicuous results. The problem may be that the United States is being represented by an outgoing President. So his position is much weaker. Nevertheless the first and foremost task for both of them is to keep the dialogue going and pave the way for later results both in the military and economic spheres.

I think one of the consequences of the on-going dialogue which is going to be highlighted at the forthcoming summit meeting is détente within Europe as well. One of the things that may come out of it sooner or later – or perhaps even sooner – is a mutual recognition of the European community and Comecon as organizations, and this will ease, smooth, and pave the way for all kinds of new political and economical relations between the European community as such on the one hand, and Comecon on the other, but also individual Western European countries and individual Eastern European countries.

Andrei Kokoshin,

corresponding member of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, deputy director of the Institute of U.S.A. and Canada Studies

On the eve of the Moscow meeting, one looks back on the path travelled since the Geneva summit.

The constructive interaction between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. has expanded perceptibly and become more dimensional. The tension in our relations is much less than in the pre-Geneva period. Concrete results have been produced, including some major ones. In addition to the INF treaty signed in Washington last December, the implementation of which will signify the beginning of nuclear disarmament, I would single out the agreement on Afghanistan, the fact that the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. are acting as joint guarantors of the agreement to settle the situation around Afghanistan. Progress has been made towards concluding a treaty on a 50-per cent cut in strategic offensive weapons.

A novel element in the dialogue was the meeting between the Defence Ministers of our countries, Dmitry Yazov and Frank Carlucci, in Berne.

I would also like to draw attention to a number of events that have occurred in the United States during this period. They are not necessarily a direct outcome of the Geneva and two subsequent summits, but they should be taken into account in the overall balance of factors determining Soviet-American relations in both the immediate and the more distant future.

The U.S. Congress has begun more actively cutting down the administration's requests for military purposes.

The mounting budget deficit, and Congress' more stringent approach to many military programmes, have compelled the administration, as from November, 1987, to revise its requests for military allocations downwards. As a result, the new Defence Secretary Frank Carlucci, when drafting his proposals for a military budget for the 1989 financial year, cut back the drafts submitted by the Armed Forces Department by about 12 per cent, and shut down 17 military programmes and a number of military bases.

For three years now the Congress has been blocking tests of anti-satellite systems on real targets in space. That means that a bilateral Soviet-American moratorium on such tests in effect exists, without being legally formalized by a treaty.

Last year the Congress took a number of steps that noticeably curtailed the Administration's opportunities to raise the limits of SALT-2 and violate the provisions of the ABM treaty. However, attempts persist to interpret the ABM treaty arbitrarily and one-sidedly, which does nothing to promote an agreement on a 50-per cent cut in strategic offensive weapons.

After the American side signed in Geneva the statement that there could be no victors in a nuclear war, this formula appeared in a number of official American documents and Presidential speeches. Specifically, it is to be found in the President's reports on the national security strategy of the United States for 1987 and 1988. However, one can't help noticing that in a whole series of high level documents, including reports by the Secretary for Defence, it is still being said that the United States must "end the conflict on terms favourable to the United States, its interests, and its allies."

Nor has the United States given up such aggressive, destabilizing elements of its military policy as a new maritime strategy, air-land battle doctrine, and a whole series of other ideas that are incompatible with the requirements of mutual security.

Although demands for overall military superiority have disappeared from the speeches of American leaders, emphasis is still being laid on ensuring military-technological superiority over the Soviet Union. Since 1987, a sustained effort has been made to wear the Soviet Union down economically by accelerating the arms race in a number of directions. This effort, styled as a "competitive strategy" is coming under fire from U.S. politicians as being an excessive burden on the country's finance.

From the coming summit one might well expect the consolidation of the results already achieved at this stage in Soviet-American relations, which in itself would be a considerable achievement. However, recent speeches in Washington cannot but arouse fears that an excessive inclination to negative rhetoric could spoil the atmosphere at the summit.

In the longer term, the prospects for normalizing Soviet-American relations, and their constructive deepening and widening, seem considerable, and in a number of parameters they surpass the situation that obtained at the beginning of the seventies.

■

Exit war, enter peace

Lev Yelin,
our special
correspondent

"Your sons?" I asked Ataullah Mamund, the chief of the tribe, pointing to two slender youths seated next to him. Ataullah shot a glance at the interpreter – and made no reply...

"Bodyguards," the interpreter whispered into my ear, as if to remind me, once again, how little I knew about those people and how slow I was to learn their ways... A high-ranking Soviet army officer described journalists visiting Afghanistan for a week or two and then hatching huge articles back home as "raiders." Am I a "raider" too? I hope I am not quite true to type, if only for the reason that I am writing about a country I have been keeping a close eye on. In this article I shall try to give the reader an idea, albeit incomplete, of the sentiments prevailing in Afghanistan today.

Pushtuns

Ataullah heads the Mamund tribe, 100,000-strong, residing in the northern part of the "free tribal area" in Pakistan. The Mamunds neighbour on the Afghan province of Kunar and, like all Pushtuns of the "tribal area," do not consider themselves Pakistani citizens. Ataullah Mamund himself is the vice-president of the newly established organization Takhriki Etikhadi Kabayel (the Movement for Tribal Unity) which has brought together the residents of all seven political agencies – territorial divisions of the "free tribal area."

"The presence of refugees on our land," Ataullah Mamund says, "is a heavy burden on the economy and social system of the tribes. The arrival of dushmans upset the balance of arms in the area. If Pakistan abides by the Geneva accords and evacuates the refugee camps, the tribes will heave a sigh of relief..."

Ataullah Mamund explained that on his tribe's territory there are 28 "official" (known to the U.N.) and four "unofficial" refugee camps. The total number of refugees runs to 192,000, as against 50,000 Mamunds living nearby.

"The Soviet troops are leaving Afghanistan," the chief went on, "and the armed opposition has no further grounds for carrying on the war. We shall try to talk the refugees, our wretched brethren, into observing the Geneva accords and returning home."

"But what if the opponents of the accords convince or compel them to stay?"

"We in the free tribal area have laws of our own...We shall convene a jirgah and call on the refugees to come home! Unfortunately, the years of undeclared war, Western intervention and encroachments on the tribes' independence have weakened our traditions... Some refugees may ignore the calls of the jirgah, or be compelled to do so. In that case, we shall use force, as our laws prescribe..."

"But there are fewer of you and, besides, the units subordinated to the Peshawar Seven are well armed..."

"That is true. But then, not all the refugees will resist us. We know the language of our wretched brethren, and they will understand us. We shall probably have to use force against the units of the armed opposition. Don't you worry, they'll never beat us:even Islamabad with its huge army cannot cope with us..."

Refugees

Mohammad Naim Ansori, 27, of Dareysuf Region, Samanghan Province, returned to Afghanistan in mid-1987. Before that, he had lived in Pakistan for some years and headed an armed unit, 1,200 strong. Almost all of his men come from his native village in Dareysuf. They had abandoned their homes and opposed themselves to the revolutionary government in Kabul which, they were led to believe, was "against Allah." In Pakistan, the unit joined the Islam Revolutionary Movement of Afghanistan headed by Mohammad Nabi. The men were not badly off but, as time passed, they came to realize that, for better or worse, Afghans must live in Afghanistan. In the meantime, the Peshawar leaders and some Europeans they had brought along asked Ansori, a commander they believed to be loyal, to cross back into his province with his unit and talk another 10,000 men into fleeing to Pakistan. The unit was promised a large sum of money, and Ansori himself U.S. citizenship.

Mohammad Naim Ansori and his 1,200 men did set off for Samanghan, knowing as they did so, that they would not come back to collect that "large sum of money."

While Ansori was telling me his story, his countrymen who had gathered in a small room nodded in agreement. The next to speak was Kurban Pahlawan (meaning "a giant"), also of Samanghan, who had come back home from Iran early this year. While in Teheran, he had earned the equivalent of 10,000 afghanis a month – an enviable wage...

"I left home because the war was on, there was neither a job, nor money. I have two daughters and a son to support...And now, reconciliation has brought me back. They can keep their 10,000 afghanis, I'd rather earn less than be away from home. All I want is to work in peace..."

Kurban Pahlawan brought 120 other Afghan refugees along from Iran.

...The people who sat around me in a Kabul Hotel room were no revolutionaries; they repeated what they had said in 1978-79: do not touch our customs, do not destroy our traditions! It turned out, however, that while disagreeing with the present government of Afghanistan, they and the leaders of the armed opposition are poles apart. Having taken the line of national reconciliation, put unity above all their differences, and opted for dialogue as a means of solving all the problems, the government has met the opposition halfway. This struck a responsive chord in the people, with their age-old tradition of settling all their disputes at jirgahs, through equal negotiations held in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

"How did we learn about reconciliation, you ask?" said Kurban Shah, who had led a unit of 250. "Over the radio... We left Nabi within days of hearing the news."

"Weren't you afraid of being cheated?"

"We believed what we heard."

This is not a question of Kurban Shah's trustfulness or resolution. He and his men returned from Pakistan, where they had fared pretty well, simply because they had become tired of the war. Now they have retaken possession of their land (which is off limits to the army, under an agreement with the government) and are their own guards.

Kurban Shah told me frankly that it made no difference to him what the com-

position of the government in Kabul would be. He only wanted it to be strong enough to be able to prevent bloody clashes between territories and tribes. And honest, too. Like the one that had pardoned him and let him come back.

The returnees' programme of action is not as vague and abstract as it seems at first glance. Kurban Shah, Kurban Pahlawan and those who have come along with them realize full well what they are going to fight against.

In an attempt to forecast further developments, the CNN television company speculated about the likely developments as follows: "The seven Afghan groupings will dissolve their alliance formed to present a united front to the Russians and resume armed conflicts among themselves in what is going to be a civil war for the future of Afghanistan." A couple of days before the withdrawal of the Soviet troops began, Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, the leader of the Peshawar Seven, announced his plans to grab part of the Afghan territory bordering on Pakistan, form a "state" of his own there, and then enter into a federation with Pakistan! This is exactly what sets them apart from most Afghans.

"If the Seven starts an internecine war for power, I, as a Moslem, will not allow this to happen on my territory," said Kurban Pahlawan, the "giant."

Millions support the Kabul government in its efforts for peace. As soon as Kabul succeeds in making government bodies broadly representative, and as soon as unity – a matter of life and death at this juncture – is achieved, all the forecasts will immediately give way to indisputable reality.

No room for extremism

Before my trip to Afghanistan, the following phrase by Steven Weisman caught my eye as I leafed through a copy of The New York Times: "While despising the Communists, many women and secular-oriented Afghans say that educated people in the cities will not welcome an Islamic fundamentalist leadership, as espoused by rebels." When in Kabul and Jalalabad, I tried to find out how true that observation was. Here, for instance, is the stand taken by Masuma Ismati, the well-known Afghan public figure and stateswoman who came to head the All-Afghanistan Women's Council a year ago. A member of parliament in the first half of the 1960s, Masuma Ismati became a fellow of the Academy of Sciences of Afghanistan in 1981. After April 1978, she came up against many problems: restrictions were imposed on her academic activities, her husband, an ex-minister of education, and her brother were jailed... The brother has now emigrated to the United States, and the husband has retired. As for Masuma, she returned to public life on realizing that the policy of national reconciliation is just what Afghanistan needs at present.

A halt. The Soviet border is a few hours' march away.

"Most of those who have emigrated will now return," she says, meaning the intellectuals, who have left Afghanistan, "in order to help build up a neutral and independent state. I am certain that power will be taken over by a coalition government representing the interests of the majority of our population. That is the most important thing for me."

Although no longer in good health (she has heart trouble) Masuma Ismati is prepared to carry on her cooperation with the new government if her services are required. What kind of government is it going to be?

"A liberal and progressive one," she says. "Afghanistan needs a government to promote social progress. Extremism and attempts to bring back the past must be ruled out..."

In Jalalabad I talked with Darbari Singh, the leader of the Sikh community. I was almost certain that if faced with a choice between progress and returning to the old order of things, the 67-year-old Sikh would prefer the latter. So his reply came as a surprise:

"I opt for progress," he said. "The old programmes no longer work, they have failed to unite the people of Afghanistan and will never do."

Bashir Omar studied in the U.S.S.R., spending a total of eleven years in our country. An honest and loyal friend of the Soviet people, he went all the way from being a teacher to deputy dean and finally dean of the civil engineering faculty of the Kabul Polytechnical Institute. I asked Bashir, now Chairman of the Union of Friendship with Foreign Countries, what would happen if the armed opposition unleashed terror against friends of the U.S.S.R. like himself.

"I am proud of what I've done... I've taught, I tried to do the people good, and I have nothing to be ashamed of. They'll never scare me into fleeing because this is my country, and whatever the future has in store for me, I'm staying here."

"Send me a Stinger, brother"

The Soviet adviser to the chief of the Afghan army's General Staff received me in his Darlaman Palace office in Kabul. I asked the Major General what his functions were.

"My job here is, by definition, to advise. We are working out a common platform in advance, and I never intervene or try to throw my weight about even if I disagree with a certain line of action. Soviet officers used to be invited to Afghanistan as advisers back in the King's day, too..."

The general thought highly of his Afghan colleagues, General Shah Nawaz Tanai, chief of the General Staff, and Lieutenant General Abdul Gafur, his first deputy. Gafur recently directed a complicated combat operation which the Afghan army had carried out on its own, redeploying an Afghan frontier guard unit. The unit virtually squeezed its way through a cliff-walled gorge, along a riverbed. At times, the engines of its vehicles were choked with water. The enemy, supported by neighbouring groups in Afghanistan proper and from Pakistan, rarely engaged the unit but inflicted serious losses on it with automatic and missile fire. The fire was so heavy that the frontier guards had to move their headquarters four times in seven days. The counterrevolutionaries had secured a firm foothold on an elevated vantage point from which they did the firing and directed the actions of all their detachments. Their command post was embedded so deep in a cliff that it was immune to return fire. Here are the texts of counterrevolutionary radio messages intercepted during the operation.

"Kamal to Almaghir: Request ammo for rocket launchers. Send more rocket projectiles. Got to be combat-ready by tomorrow so as to strike on 7th Saur (April 27, Revolution Day. – **L.Y.**). We'll start action by shelling the infantry regiment."

"Kelghinghar to Almaghir: Brother, send us two Stingers: enemy aircraft are harassing us."

"Turyalai to Almaghir: The mines you've mentioned are planted in good places by the roadside...It's great! Keep hitting that place, it's the Communists' main command post. After Usman is through with shooting, Sufi is to take over."

"Usman to Umar: We're in the same place, right at the top. The communist headquarters have dodged our fire..."

"Usman to Umar, Almaghir, Majid: Brother, a civil servant got here from the district yesterday. He said: dear friends, we can get the government troops out of your way..."

"Such things do happen," the general told me. "After that visit, the counterrevolutionaries learned about the new deployment of the Afghan command post..."

"Usman to Sidiq: You've got to shift fire 50 mètres to the right...When you work with a mortar, Sufi is to fire machine gun. Fire one rocket projectile every five minutes."

"Centre (probably from Pakistan) **to an unknown person:** A new group of 50 has reached you. They don't know the locality. Show them the route and station them on a height from which they can cover the column."

The enemy got stronger and better organized. They worked out complex operations and coordinated their actions. On the other hand, the Afghan army grew immeasurably stronger too. Lieutenant General Gafur outsmarted Usman and the Centre, inflicted heavy losses on the bands, and carried the mission through.

* * *

When you find yourself in Afghanistan, among our officers and men, among Afghan friends, many of the questions that haunt you in Moscow recede into the background, giving way to anxiety about every Soviet lad's life, and the sight of dead Afghan children after a missile attack is so shocking that the detached weighing of pros and cons seems out of place. Nevertheless, the questions remain. "Our participation in the Afghan conflict is a very complex problem which has to do with many aspects of what we are overcoming in the process of perestroika and of a steady transmutation of new thinking into practical politics," Mikhail Gorbachev said, and I quote these words not merely for quoting's sake. They give us a rich food for thought.

New thinking has elevated us to a new and higher level of handling problems, and May 15 furnished specific evidence of that.

The withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan has brought favourable comments from abroad. Having answered our own "burning questions," we shall only gain in self-respect.

Our servicemen are coming back. They have been decorated for their courage, for the lives they saved (often at the cost of their own). They are being given well-deserved honours for having done their soldierly duty. As for the rest of us, we have still to sort out the very complex problem of the Soviet Union's involvement in the Afghan conflict.

JALALABAD-KABUL-MOSCOW

Photo by Vladimir Svartsevich, special correspondent of the newspaper Izvestia

PRIVATE OPINION

HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

PREM TINSULANONDA,
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand

As my meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev and talks with Prime Minister Ryzhkov showed, both Thailand and the Soviet Union believe that now is the most suitable moment for the countries concerned to come together to find a way of successfully resolving the Kampuchean problem. The overall political climate worldwide is now developing along positive lines. This is largely due to the fact that during last year's U.S.S.R.-U.S.A. summit it was possible to sign the INF treaty, and that at the new summit in Moscow both sides will seek to find a common stand on a treaty to halve strategic weapons.

Moreover, it is gratifying that the Geneva agreement on a settlement of the Afghan problem was signed last month and that the Soviet Union has already begun withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan. The Soviet leadership assured me that it would abide implicitly by all its obligations under the agreement.

The Kampuchean problem does have something in common with the Afghan problem, but it differs from it in many respects. Consequently, the principles on which the situation in Afghanistan is being settled cannot be applied wholesale to the Kampuchean problem. The withdrawal of foreign troops from Kampuchea would allow it to become a neutral and independent state. And if Vietnam determines firmly both the time and schedule for the withdrawal of its troops from Kampuchea, that, I am sure, would be the key to solving other aspects of the problem, and could in the final count ensure a stable and just settlement for all concerned.

Shares for sale

A profit-sharing scheme for Lvov?

Leonid Sotnik

Elisabeth Hedborg, who had reached Lvov after travelling with her camera crew over half the country, made no secret of the fact that she considered herself lucky.

The Swedish documentary makers were shooting a film about perestroika in the U.S.S.R. The camera had caught numerous people and a variety of landscapes: from the mountain ridges of the Caucasus to the northern forests. And still Elisabeth felt that something was missing. A real reporter always needs a vivid event or phenomenon which he or she has witnessed or been involved in.

And such a phenomenon unexpectedly presented itself in Lvov.

A branch of the Savings Bank of the U.S.S.R. was opened at the state joint-stock socialist amalgamation Konveier, and shares were selling like hot cakes. Workers and engineers at the Konveier amalgamation were buying crisp pink and green notes of a 50-ruble denomination each.

It is necessary to recall some past events to establish why a joint-stock company without precedent in the U.S.S.R. should have emerged in Lvov, of all places, and what economic methods it uses.

...The Lvov amalgamation manufactures mainly load-carrying and pushing conveyers, monorail, robots and manipulators, automated sections and consumer goods. They are marketed everywhere, and there are hardly any complaints about quality. Such is the state of things now, whereas at the beginning of the eleventh five-year period, Konveier had only 60 per cent of the orders it needed to operate to capacity, and the prospects for its future were uncertain. In view of the enterprise's insolvency, the U.S.S.R. State Bank imposed special financing conditions on it, that is, the enterprise started to exist on credit.

Newly-appointed general director Valentin Vologzhin had to decide what was to be done about it.

He started with changing the amalgamation's structure. What was it like in the early eighties? The director compared it to a mammoth with neither head nor tail. True, the firm could design and manufacture equipment (it included a design institute). This is the acme of some organizations' desires. But the structure was still far from perfect. There was no one to study market demand and to gear production to it. The amalgamation did not have regular contacts with buyers and practically forgot all about them after a sale had been made.

At present the amalgamation's structure is as follows:

1. A conveyer-construction design institute and a market research section.

2. The headquarters plant and its branches.

3. The department for contract supervision, start-up and adjustment operations and maintenance. The marketing section has contacts with 2,000 enterprises in various branches of the national economy. It finds out what exactly the customer needs, taking into account the specific features of production at a given enterprise. Then the institute comes up with a detail design and hands it over to the plant.

The maintenance department was the mammoth's tail. But then, with the creation of a complete managerial structure, the likeness to a mammoth ended. The structure ceased to be cumbersome and unwieldy. The amalgamation has become a solid enterprise that can assume full responsibility for the design and manufacture of an article and its maintenance throughout its service life.

But however perfect the structure in itself, it could not ensure an excellent end result without giving every section and every participant an incentive to do their best.

Valentin Vologzhin engaged a group of experts from the Lvov branch of the Institute of Economics of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences and faced them with the task of creating a model for the enterprise's management by means of cost-accounting and self-financing. At the time it was a bold and farsighted decision. The resolution of the CPSU Central Committee to conduct a large-scale economic experiment was issued a year after the group of economists had concluded its work and come out with concrete recommendations. It is interesting that the principles involved in the experiment largely coincided with the experts' recommendations. The amalgamation has thus been able to participate easily in the experiment.

The new stage of economic activity actually started in January 1987 with a transition to complete cost-accounting and self-financing. The plan for technological progress, the basis of self-financing calculations was, specifically, reviewed to achieve higher growth rates for labour productivity and lower production costs. The review of the five-year plan continues to this day. There are always unforeseen expenditures, so there is a need for the replenishment of sources and of financing. (Note this aspect). But the word "review" should not be taken literally. It is not the targets of the five-year plan but the methods of achieving them that are reviewed. A counter plan with a tighter schedule than the official one is put forward. And by fulfilling it without additional investment, the amalgamation expects to increase its funds by 3.4 million rubles. 47 per cent of this sum will go to the fund for the development of production, science, and technology, 41 per cent to the fund for meeting social and cultural needs and housing construction and 12 per cent to the fund for material incentive.

There is no need to weary the reader with numerous calculations and examples. It is enough to say that the cost-accounting mechanism was set in motion at the amalgamation earlier than at other places.

The Konveier showed excellent indices last year and continued to gather momentum. They seemed never to have had it so good. And then an ordinary production amalgamation became a joint-stock company.

"What made you do that," I asked Vologzhin. "There is virtually no experience in this country of running joint-stock companies (except for the long-lost experience of the twenties), while the bureaucratic obstacles in the way are formidable and many – the ministry of the in-

dustry in question, the Ministry of Finance, the State Bank, the local authorities... It can take one half one's life to get in touch with them all, let alone convince them..."

"We had no alternative," Vologzhin answered. Self-financing presupposes drawing largely on credits. One can turn for credits to a bank. But other sources of financing can also be used. If one holds the interests of the enterprise dear, one can help it with one's own money. If one helps finance the enterprise today, one will not be any worse off for it tomorrow. The logic of self-financing is such that the distinction between what belongs to the state and what belongs to an individual disappears. The pronoun 'ours' takes on a concrete, practical meaning."

This reasoning seems convincing. But what is the reality?

"We have set ourselves the task of analyzing the ways in which the fixed assets created at the enterprise influence performance. We have arrived at the conclusion that the fund for the development of production and keeping it abreast of the latest in science and technology gives an incentive only to those who are responsible for development prospects, that is, the managerial staff, whereas workers and engineers are not even interested in this fund being increased as they will have to install new equipment and learn new skills and trades. The social development fund gives incentive until the basic problems – housing, kindergartens, food supply, health care, etc. – are solved. With their solution the stimulating effect of the fund will decrease. The bonus fund offers no solution either. It cannot be fully used even when performance is good as the ratio between the labour productivity growth and the growth of wages would thus be upset. Hence, a certain proportion of the fund will always remain untouched.

"Then what is the way out? What is needed is a mechanism through which the factory's profit would make a difference to each employee, regardless of his or her position. To our mind, this mechanism is self-crediting. It is based on the principles of banking, on the Law on the State Enterprise (Amalgamation), the Law on Work Collectives, and on the elements of profit sharing. A branch of the U.S.S.R. Savings Bank has been set up in the amalgamation. Each employee of Konveyer has a right to two accounts at the bank.

"We have taken a loan to form the basic self-crediting fund. It amounts to the sum of three monthly tariff rates or three monthly salaries of the amalgamation's employees. The loan is to be repaid within three to five years, precisely through drawing on the bonus fund.

"After the loan is repaid, the self-crediting fund will be replenished through interest on deposits."

Specimens of Lvov securities.

"This is the source of one of the accounts. What about the other?

"It is made up of individual funds lodged in accounts at the Savings Bank."

"Is this why shares of the same denomination are of different colours?"

"Yes. The pink note has the words 'Incentive Fund', while the green one says 'Personal Deposit.'"

We should now cite some excerpts from the document entitled "The statute on setting up and distributing the funds of state joint-stock socialist enterprise:

"The size of the profits to be shared among the state joint-stock socialist enterprise members is set by the work collective council on the basis of the quarter's performance; the profit shares are distributed from the balance of the factory bonus fund sorted out into planned expenditure items. The sum is remitted to the branch of the Savings Bank to be lodged in interest accounts of members of the state joint-stock socialist enterprise.

"Besides that, a five-per-cent annual interest rate on the balance in the accounts is paid out from the incentive fund.

The self-crediting fund thus constitutes the amalgamation's reserve. The statute allows the administration , taking the opinion of the work collective into account, to use 85 per cent of the fund for production needs and social development and also, in the interests of the work collectives, for other purposes that do not run counter to existing legislation."

Employees have a right to use simple and compound interest on the deposit at their discretion. And what if a person decides to withdraw his deposit? The deposit is withdrawn upon dismissal or retirement. Savings could come in handy at such times. If a worker decides to withdraw his deposit out of some other consideration, there is nothing to stop him. True, in such a case he withdraws from the self-crediting bank too.

Participation in the Lvov financial venture is on a strictly voluntary basis. But the collective has supported the idea. People realize that in conditions of complete cost-accounting there could be unforeseen situations connected with market changes, the use of new equipment, housing construction and so on, when it is necessary to have fund reserves.

The self-crediting fund at Konveier has already reached 900,000 rubles. And the sale of shares has just started.

It is not for us to judge whether the model used in Lvov will suit everyone. One thing is clear that the process of restructuring is a process of creative exploration and departure from cliches and stereotypes in thinking. And the Lvov model is just one example of a creative approach.

And finally, how can people profit by holding shares in the Lvov firm? The enterprise has fixed the minimum annual interest at five per cent, to be deposited once a quarter. This is barely a minimum. Depending on the enterprise's success, the interest could rise to 20 per cent.

Shareholders can withdraw their investment at any time.

Democracy must be guaranteed

Tair Tairov

History has repeatedly taught people that the success or failure of social or economic reforms depends directly on the existence or absence of the corresponding political backing. Both reformers and the reforms themselves require a mechanism protecting them from the forces standing in their way.

Having taken on itself the historic initiative to spearhead a process of political reorientation, the CPSU acknowledged through the lips of its General Secretary that "the leading bodies of the Party and state bear the responsibility for the conservatism, the inertia, the wish to brush aside everything that does not fit into the customary framework, and the reluctance to tackle outstanding social and economic problems."

But today, while not denying the historic need to ask "who's to blame?", society is courageously and insistently looking for the answer to another question: "why?"

There have been quite a number of attempts to draw public attention to negative phenomena and overcome stagnation, and ideas have been put forward for economic and social reforms. But the efforts of honest and progressive individuals have come up against a wall of social inertia, indifference and fear on the part of many leaders that they might lose their high positions. As a result, support for these new undertakings was replaced by statements that "measures had been taken," and on a number of occasions resulted in the punishment of those who had come forward with a new initiative. Initiative is punishable – that used to be said half-seriously, half-jokingly in those days. And, as if in confirmation, complaints of violations of the norms of Party life or law were usually sent back to be dealt with by the very people against whom the complaints were directed. This mechanism, based on "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours," this subordination of local to state interests, corruption and the upholding of narrow group interests operated virtually without a hitch.

However, to look for what lay behind these phenomena only in the spheres of social psychology and morality – as some are trying to do today – is, I am convinced – a hopeless task. This social pathology is rooted in the nature and principles of the political system of those days, when there was no control over top officials, when the masses were denied, (naturally, not in so many words, but in deeds), their right to political activity and independence and to control. To use legal terms, there were no political opportunities for citizens to act or display any initiative. Those spheres of life where the public could speak up or act were strictly delineated and controlled by people appointed to their posts, by the bureaucracy, including the Party bureaucracy. The public was in effect alienated from the process of decision-making. It was this system and its imperfections and drawbacks that produced homo dogmaticus, a host of authoritarian individuals who took for granted the social relations that had taken shape and their own command position in them.

Seventy years in the life of a new type of state and society is not a long period in history. While the bourgeois system is based on a set of political relations evolved over the centuries, the first socialist society had nothing to draw on except its own experience of revolutionary creativity, the experience of the Paris Commune.

Nevertheless, this experience is formidable. It should not be viewed in isolation from the main roads along which mankind has evolved, but in the context of the unity, mutual influence and mutual dependence of peoples and societies.

The concept of a civil society has, it is well known, developed over the past 200 years in the political life of a number of countries in Europe and in North America. Let me remind you: it presupposes the existence of autonomous and institutionalized channels, independent of the state (which in some countries is described as rechtsstadt), through which the rights of citizens and their associations, their initiatives and their political participation in the governing of society and the state can be implemented. One cannot deny the positive experience acquired in the European countries by the bodies of municipal self-government and the interaction of state institutions with public organizations, representative institutions and executive bodies.

The emergence of Soviets – the fruit of the revolutionary creative efforts of the citizens of Russia – opened up new possibilities for creating the basis of a civil society in our country in new conditions.

Unfortunately, many internal and external factors – the counterrevolution and civil war, external intervention – slowed down the process of establishing a civil society and stepped up the state regulation of all aspects of our life. And so a system allowing citizens, their associations and public organizations to discuss openly and in advance, alongside state and Party bodies, issues pertaining to the effectiveness of the political, social and economic setup, and the responsibility and competence of leading cadres, did not have time to develop. That, in turn, in many respects helped form the personality cult, made possible abuses of power, and strengthened rule by administrative command.

Today, wiser from the hard experience of history, we speak of striving towards a new state of socialism. That course the Soviet Communists set for themselves after the 27th Congress. And how do we picture that new state of socialism?

First and foremost, de-bureaucratization is essential and social relations must be rid of state patronage. That process cannot proceed on its own without the democratization of

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the Soviet Communist Party itself and a constructive analysis of its place in the system of political relations. What is needed is a clear-cut concept of the Party's place in the political system, one that will rule out the possibility of monopolizing and absolutizing power both at local level and in the centre. The new state of our society is impossible without drawing into the Party apparatus the most knowledgeable and experienced people conforming to the highest moral criteria, without genuine openness, competition and rotation in this apparatus from top to bottom. The forthcoming Party conference will provide the answers to many questions concerning democratization within the Party and increasing the effectiveness of its bodies in carrying perestroika through.

What the future Soviet society will be like depends on a critical re-assessment of all its aspects, of the entire political and public work of the Soviets as a form of political power born from the creative revolutionary efforts of the people. The Soviets emerged as a result of the political intervention in affairs of state of ordinary citizens as representatives of people's power ensuring the political involvement of all citizens. It was a form of civil society with inherent possibilities for working openly and legally for the interests of the different sections of the population, and in which the different interests of citizens could exist side by side and interact peacefully. Now this potential must be fully realized, with the initial concept of the Soviets being scrubbed clean of all alien coatings.

What needs to be done today is to ensure that the representative bodies of power concentrate in their hands all forms of civic participation in running society. People's consciousness and political interests naturally differ depending on their ages, nationalities and conditions of life. But it is essential to impart greater effectiveness to the social and political mechanisms, as well as to the channels guaranteed by the law, designed to enable each individual **not only to express** his individual (or collective) view, **but also to take part in decision-making** on issues affecting the people and the state.

The democratization of the Party and the return to the Soviets of their fundamental role in the life of society are mutually-dependent and mutually enriching processes. Where, if not through the Soviets, could and should Communists wage an open and honest struggle for the interests of society? Where, if not in the Soviets, should the common interests of the Party, trade unions, public organizations, different nationalities and different sections of society be represented, and how, if not through the Soviets, can the actions of the executive bodies be controlled?

Of course, without additional legal measures there can be no expansion of the sphere of people's power (raising and tackling the problems of the country's social, economic and political development and its foreign policy through discussion, in which representative bodies of Soviet civil society participate and give their approval to the steps proposed.) What are the legal measures needed?

I am convinced that the democratization of public life also presupposes **improvements in the mechanism for the participation of professional and public organizations in the development of our society.** The way I see it is that these organizations would be rid of any outside overseers, their status would be guaranteed by law, and they would participate in the running of society through their work in the Soviets, through the press and representative bodies.

In the period of perestroika, the Party has to accomplish a gigantic task, and that today is its historic role. It has to draw up the optimal ratio between the extent of state and public participation in the political system and strengthen the position of individuals in the scale of moral and political values. In this connection, clearly special laws will be needed, and perhaps existing ones improved, those that concern the registration and legal status of associations of citizens – creative unions, public organizations, foundations, various all-Union, republican and local associations that unite people on the basis of common professional or other interests.

The formation of so-called "institutions of glasnost" will be of special significance for Soviet civil society, including laws on the press and glasnost, on TV, laws that would legalize and promote the present process of greater participation of the people in state and public affairs.

And so the task facing us today is to draft an optimal model (taking into account the positive experience of the first years of Soviet power and the negative experience of the age of command government) of the new state of socialist statehood – a Soviet multinational civil society.

Our society is probably now living through the most interesting period in its development. The task ahead is to modernize and adjust the political system in such a way as to exclude any possibility of fresh stagnation or absolutization of power by one person or group of people. We have to make our civic democracy self-developing and self-adjusting, not leaving it to the top authorities to be able in future to make all changes in its structure and operation. In order to build barriers to nepotism and the arbitrary rule of the self-perpetuating bureaucracy, the 27th CPSU Congress raised the question of the people's participation as an integral part of the political system.

The violations of the norms of Party and state life, abuses of power that led to the violation of people's rights also occurred because the state actually fully ignored the interests of both society and the individual. Now we have to set things right, ensure that relations between society and the state be properly balanced so that citizens and their associations, Communists and non-Communists alike, can exercise the "right to interfere" in all cases.

There should be no secrets in our society (even the finer points of defence in our nuclear-missile age eventually become known). One of the strongest and most attractive aspects of the communist movement and its strength lie in honesty and openness.

We already have some positive experience in holding elections with several candidates standing for each seat. Clearly, we need to go further, making substantial changes in the electoral system and restructuring the supreme bodies of power. It is essential that really competent and concerned people should be elected competitively and after public discussions to these representative bodies, and that in these bodies there should be an open struggle both for the interests of individual sections and categories of the population, as well as for the interests of society as a whole. A start can and should be made right away in the course of the elections of delegates to the forthcoming Party conference.

The improved, more flexible and democratic state of our society is inseparable from the concept of a civil society. The further we advance on the way to revealing Soviet society's healthy elements interested in perestroika, and clear the way for them to display their public activity, the more quickly we can strengthen the political platform that will be the foundation for irreversible changes for the better.

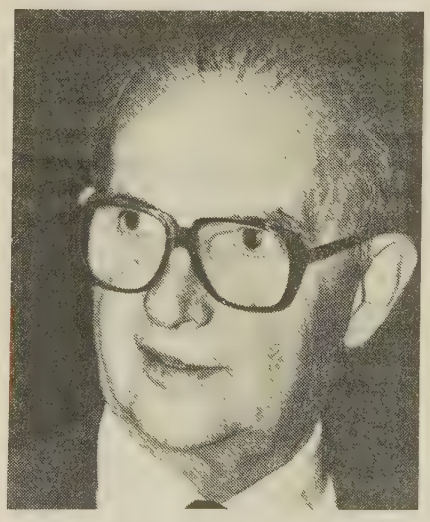
A trying time

Zdzislaw Sadowski
Deputy Chairman of the
Council of Ministers,
Polish People's Republic

discusses the recent developments and the current social and economic situation in his country

Late April and early May was a troubled time in Poland. In Bydgoszcz, public transport came to a standstill, some workers at the steel plant in Nowa Huta and the Gdansk shipyard downed tools, and there were attempts to disrupt classes in several colleges....Ostensibly all this was in protest against the price rises in February and April as part of the second stage of the Polish economic reform. But were prices the only reason?

The enemies of socialism tried hard to represent these events as a repetition of the summer of 1980, but the sporadic actions of 1988 were a far cry from the notorious wave of strikes whose consequences are still felt by the Polish people. The differences are not only in the scale of the action but – most importantly, perhaps – in the attitudes of various social strata. Polish public opinion ex-



perts have noted that the bulk of the intelligentsia, the peasantry, mature young people (mainly freshmen took part in the demonstrations) and large sections of the working class condemned rather than backed the strikes this year. As Jerzi Urban, the government's press spokesman, said at a press conference on May 10, "the working class did not enter the same water in which we all caught a chill in 1981." The situation was defused fairly quickly and painlessly.

Nevertheless, on May 11 the Polish Sejm overwhelmingly approved a law giving the government emergency powers. What lay behind this decision? How is the Polish economic reform proceeding?

New Times correspondent Rudolf Borecki put these questions to Professor Zdzislaw Sadowski, Poland's Deputy Premier and Chairman of the Council of Ministers' Planning Commission.

New Times. We are talking at a period which can hardly be described as favourable for the reform. But unlike in 1980-1981, when I also worked in Poland, my numerous friends say approximately the same thing: the strikes and even short stoppages in work in the present situation are simply adventurism.

Zdzislaw Sadowski. That's true. The necessity for reform, with all the attendant difficulties, is realized both in and outside the country. It is clear to many people that the present tensions are not just economic but also social and political in character. On the face of it, they have been caused by the change in the structure of prices and incomes in February-April. Such changes are always unpopular. But we had to streamline prices and bring them into line with reality to implement the reform. We prepared for this complex operation thoroughly and tried to explain the meaning of our measures and make the general public ap-

preciate all the circumstances surrounding the reform. This undoubtedly helped people grasp the entire picture better and more correctly. This accounts for the sober assessments and judgements you quoted earlier.

And yet it cannot be denied that the public mood has deteriorated. I can share an observation familiar to economists: people need time to get used to rises in prices and, for that matter, in incomes. The first reaction from the public is resentment at the new prices. Even if the price rises have been matched by rises in incomes. For instance, on average incomes have gone up even more than prices (to varying degrees for various social groups, of course). The process of adapting to a new situation usually takes about six months, as researchers have found out. The initial period is characterized by widespread discontent and annoyance.

N.T. You said that the existing tensions appeared to have been caused by price rises.

Z.S. Yes, on the face of it it looks that way. But the gist of the matter is that this initial period of mass resentment is being used by our political opponents to stir up discontent with our policy. The latest strikes are a typical example of political speculation. There have been attempts to disguise political actions as industrial action to press demands for higher wages, often totally unjustified. For if we had embarked on that road it would have automatically thrown the economy and the market into disarray. To my mind the economic demands were secondary and derivative. They were used to foment social conflict.

N.T. There was a clear attempt to appeal to the selfish interests even of those who are totally indifferent to political games.

Z.S. That's right. It is to the credit of the majority of my compatriots that our political opponents failed to drum up any significant support.

N.T. Yes, at the end of the first ten days in May, tension relaxed and public interest in various protest actions fell off. But the question that may well be asked is whether these actions were in any sense inevitable? Let us turn to the events in Bydgoszcz. As far as I know, signals of discontent among the city transport workers over their wages were coming out of that city as early as 1984. A year ago, the trade union raised the issue with the authorities.

Z.S. Of course tensions are easier to resolve before they develop into a conflict. But I would like to repeat: the recent strikes had a political background. The opponents tried to exploit all unresolved issues to the maximum. This was the case in Bydgoszcz. The situation was compounded by a more general problem: the municipal services which previously were subsidized from the centre had switched to self-financing out of local budgets as part of the reform. The Bydgoszcz conflict was thus a local conflict between the work force and the management, the enterprise and the municipal authorities. The government does not interfere in such conflicts, as we have already decentralized in many respects, decision-making included.

N.T. But the conflict was defused quickly and comparatively calmly. Could you tell us more about the methods of resolving such conflict situations?

Z.S. In this particular case, the agreement was reached by city transport workers and the city authorities. The demands of the workers were recognized as just because they were indeed underpaid. The local authorities had two options open to them: to rechannel some resources from other areas (education, social security, health) or raise the prices of products of the enterprise, in this case the fares. By general agreement, tram and bus fares were increased. The decision was not received with jubilation. But there was no one to contribute the necessary sum to the city's budget.

In short, a new mechanism emerged to defuse the conflicts. But here is the snag: while the local authorities now have the right to make decisions, they have not yet learnt to exercise this right flexibly, sensibly and on a large scale. We have yet to overcome old habits and stereotypes. Our reform is into its seventh year, but those who have the powers and the responsibility to make decisions have difficultly getting used to their new role. This is a major social and psychological problem. In fact, it is the biggest obstacle in the way of reform today.

I believe this is the problem of every reform. It is not enough to change the legal system and the institutional framework and offer new opportunities for acting and decision-making. The people have to learn to work and administer in a new way.

N.T. People continue to live in the past, find it difficult to shed old attitudes, losing touch with reality. This psychological gap is a brake on change.

Z.S. Yes, we are very conscious of this brake.

N.T. Recently Mieczyslaw Rakowski, Deputy Chairman of the Sejm, criticized the government for its indecision and the slow pace of the reform. For two months nothing had been done to implement Wojciech Jaruselski's idea of emergency powers for the Council of Ministers, proclaimed on March 11 at the Congress of the United Peasants' Party.

Z.S. I don't think the criticism is quite justified. The programme for what we call the second stage of the reform was finally endorsed by the Sejm in February, i.e., three months ago. This programme has been consistently implemented from the start. There has been no delay – on the contrary, there's even been some acceleration.

Speaking of Jaruselski's proposal, it had to do with measures to overcome the obstacles that have cropped up in the process of the reform. The introduction of these measures was made conditional on the economic results of the first quarter.

N.T. As chief of the reform think tank, do you believe the results for the quarter are satisfactory?

Z.S. The overall economic results are extremely satisfactory. They indicate a rise in all economic growth indices. But some negative phenomena still stand out against the generally satisfactory background. We are short of raw materials for the manufacture of some products, especially consumer goods. This affects the interests of the population. The announcement of the proposed price rises led to hoarding. All this affected the state of the market, although some buffer stocks had been laid in beforehand. All these factors combined to influence public feeling. As a result, prices and the amount of money in circulation increased more than we expected. An undesirable element of unpredictability speeded up the inflationary process. This is of course an unfortunate result. In other words, the first steps towards implementing the decisive stage of the reform have been controversial. But we have already achieved much, not only on the economic front but in our awareness of what stands in the way of further progress.

N.T. This brings me to my next questiokn. One often hears that bureaucracy has been and is the main hindrance to reform. What do you think?

Z.S. Bureaucracy of course is an obstacle to reform. But I believe that a blanket use of the term is simplistic and needs to be deciphered. First, bureaucracy has many faces, it reveals itself at various levels of administration and economic management, not only in the centre but also on the periphery. There is bureaucracy in the cooperatives, and directors of industrial enterprises can also turn out to be bureaucrats.

N.T. In general then, a bureaucrat is what he is, not due to his post, but due to his character and mentality, his mode of acting and taking decisions.

Z.S. Yes, one could say that it is an attitude to life. It is this attitude that needs to be overcome. And because it is manifested at different levels and in different forms, the phenomenon cannot be cut down at one fell swoop. We need to create a system that would make red tape impossible.

We believe such a system will result from the second stage of the reform. Without going into details, I can say that we have proposed more than 170 changes. Each has an anti-bureaucratic thrust in that it offers maximum freedom in decision-making and maximum flexibility in action.

N.T. Do you still have the problem of loss-making enterprises sponging on advanced and profit-making ones?

Z.S. We have waged a determined campaign against this, and we've met with some success. These phenomena stem mainly from outdated organizational structures, but not infrequently new structures, for example, workers' self-government bodies, also stand in the way of reform. When, for instance, you have a diversified enterprise where the interests of profitable and unprofitable units clash and the majority of those in the self-governing body belong to unprofitable units. Such obstacles are particularly felt in the context of the generally unfavourable financial position of the country and its foreign indebtedness. We cannot use short-term credits to buy technology, goods and raw materials. We have no currency. This is a constant constraint on our economy.

N.T. What is the significance, in these conditions, of the government's emergency powers.

Z.S. In a general way, emergency powers are aimed at providing a shortcut to the goals of the second stage of the reform programme. They have to do with three problems: organization, personnel and economics. In the field of organization, the Council of Ministers has been given greater leverage with enterprises to induce them to carry out reform measures more quickly and effectively. It will now be easier to demonopolize the economy and raise the profitability of each enterprise. In particular, it will help to carry out the painful liquidation of unprofitable enterprises.

N.T. Have any enterprises been liquidated?

Z.S. Yes, more than thirty.

N.T. What happened to the employees?

Z.S. In most cases the bankrupt enterprises were taken over by profitable ones. The work force or most of it joined the new association. So far we've had no social problems.

The second problem is one of personnel. We must create a free and calm atmosphere for those economic managers who act independently and effectively, i.e., in the spirit of reform. And second – and this is directly linked with emergency powers – we must quickly recall those managers who do not fit in with the concept of reform and impede its implementation.

The third problem is accelerating the economic mechanisms involved in restoring equilibrium in domestic market. For instance, we still have a morbid propensity to build imposing and expensive administrative offices, and this in conditions of an acute housing crisis. The government has been empowered to thwart such attempts and to rechannel the resources into housing construction.

N.T. Will the new law contribute to preventing possible social friction?

Z.S. That is a difficult question. Any unpopular action carries the seeds of conflict. The liquidation of an enterprise that is not economically viable has never been welcomed by its workers anywhere in the world. In our conception of the reform, we have tried to take the social and professional aspects of the problem into account. We have created a special fund to subsidize workers in the transitional period, and give authorized grants, allowances to pay for retraining and so on. But it is unlikely that the liquidation of an enterprise or an office will meet with universal support.

N.T. Will the emergency powers act influence the speed with which the second stage of the reform is implemented?

Z.S. The rate of the reform is determined by its programme, the master plan. Our main task now is to keep to the timetable as strictly as possible. The deadlines are very harsh – about three years. This is a very short time for a thorough-going reform of the economic system. But from the human angle... we have to learn to wait while contributing to renewal and understanding its essence. Unfortunately not everyone can do that, especially in a society which is tired of waiting and of constant scarcities of consumer goods and high prices.

This prompted the idea of emergency help to the reform. But this help will follow the original plan and deadlines.

N.T. My last question may surprise you because I want to put it to you in your capacity as an economist and not as Deputy Premier. If we leave aside for a moment your duties in government and ask whether you believe in the ultimate success of the reform, what would be your answer?

Z.S. Of course I do. Otherwise I wouldn't have taken on this difficult task. Of course, one has to work hard to achieve success. Success can only be the result of intense and coordinated activity of all elements in the economy. The government's role is to provide the best possible organization for this complex process. The process should go on regardless of the snags and obstacles that are sure to be encountered along this difficult road. Otherwise the reform will come to grief.

Moreover, the success of the reform will depend not only on what happens in our own country but on the state of affairs in friendly countries because we are engaged in the same mechanism of mutual help, and are following the same course. That is why we are watching the course of perestroika in the U.S.S.R. with such keen interest. I believe our Soviet colleagues are watching just as keenly what is happening in this country and in other socialist countries.

N.T. Thank you on behalf of our readers and the editorial office.

Warsaw

Do not blame the locomotive

Integration processes and the currency system. What lags behind?

Boris Sergeyev

The currency and financial system of the CMEA member states drew much attention in the past as well. True, previouly this system – like the whole of the CMEA economic mechanism – was praised to the skies, for the most part undeservedly, and almost as fervently as it is now being censured. The CMEA countries' collective currency – the convertible ruble – is referred to by some as a "stillborn baby." However, this "baby" is already 25 years old. The system based on the convertible ruble catered most efficiently to commodity turnover between the CMEA member states. Over that period a total 7,86.6 trillion convertible rubles' worth of trade was done. It is also noteworthy that the system centering on the International Bank for Economic Cooperation (IBEC) was and is as smooth-running and efficient as the best of them. In fact, this system is one of the leading in the world.

Another example. The author of a Moscow News article lists the introduction of about 2,000 currency coefficients (which have, indeed, caused a regress, as will be seen below) among the shortcomings of the international socialist system of account settling. However, these coefficients do not belong to the international system at all, and are of our own invention. In other CMEA countries, a single or several currency exchange rates are accepted.

This is not to say that the CMEA's currency-financial system is above criticism. It falls short of modern standards in many respects. At the same time, it provides a mirror image of the trade and economic relations that have taken shape to date.

Generally speaking, the present currency system is out of keeping with the integration processes we would like to see in the CMEA. On the other hand, the current process of integration would not be compatible with an improved currency system. This is the most complex contradiction to be resolved within the next few years. Such a knot of contradictions is nothing new. The EEC, for instance, has been tackling similar problems throughout the postwar period.

Is the convertible ruble to blame for its "inconvertibility"?

The contradictions of the CMEA's currency-financial system have been clearly manifest for some time. Since the early 1970s, there has been much talk of the need to improve the currency sphere and intensify integration processes, and of integration and its successes. Actually, integration has been going fairly slowly, and even regressing at times. In a number of spheres, centrifugal forces and narrow national interests have prevailed.

What are the main problems? I think they are the slowing down of international processes throughout the 1970s, and an outdated concept of development. For a long time the CMEA's principal mission was believed to be promoting the rapid restoration of the fraternal countries' war-ravaged economies. Cooperation consisted chiefly in the Soviet Union supplying raw materials to the other CMEA countries, which reciprocated with manufactured goods – by way of payments in kind for the most part. Intra-CMEA cooperation outside this two-way traffic was of secondary importance. The system was based on the premise that it isolated the CMEA countries from the "pernicious influence" of the capitalist commodity and currency markets (this theory, dreamed up by the architects of the system, later proved illusory). The system confined the member states to a kind of "hothouse,"

which was largely justified in the early postwar years but not in the 1970s when, with the world's nations becoming increasingly interdependent, this isolation came to retard the economic progress of the CMEA countries (for instance, many industries geared to the CMEA's requirements fail to compete on the world market). As for the CMEA members whose products are highly competitive, they seek to earn hard currency by exporting to the West, which eventually has a disintegrating effect on the CMEA.

As we see, there has taken shape a radial two-way trade system within the CMEA, centering on the Soviet Union, with interstate commodity deliveries rigidly coordinated – not even in value terms, but in physical indices. For instance, country A commits itself to deliver a million tons of oil to country B. For its part, country B is to supply country A with a certain quantity of machines, equipment, etc. This practice makes it impossible to promote multilateral trade links and multilateral payments.

Another example. If country A closes a year's trade with country B in the black, it can spend its convertible-ruble surplus on the goods it needs in country B only – and even that following a preliminary finalization of deliveries at the level of the top planning bodies – but not in country C, with which it has separate accounts to settle. Which goes to show that the convertible ruble is not actually convertible at all; and nor can it be so, with the present structure and organization of trade being what they are. As Nikolai Ryzhkov stressed in his speech at the Hungarian Economic Chamber in April 1988, "we have no real economic relations, no real trade... Until we build up an economic mechanism that opens up the way for the development of money and commodity relations, no profound changes will take place." In other words, the convertible ruble is not to blame for its "inconvertibility." You cannot blame it for that any more than you can a locomotive for riding along the tracks, not across them. The question is: where do the tracks lead?

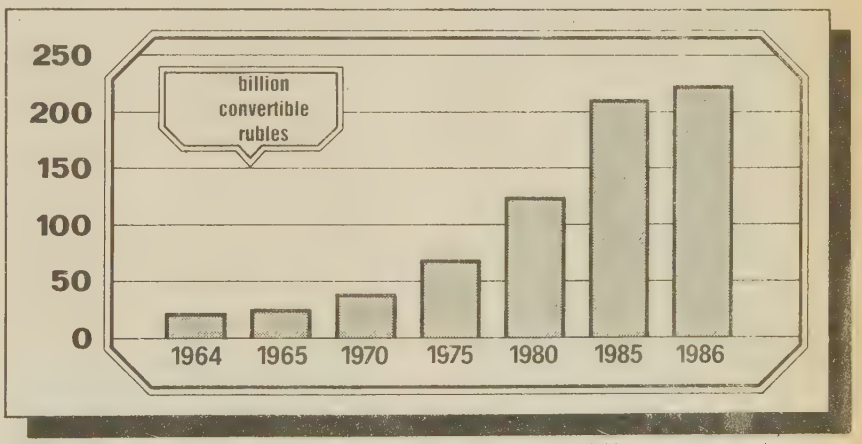
Problems that cannot be left unsolved

If the convertible ruble is to answer to its name and purpose, the CMEA countries must, first of all, always have some goods to spare and, second, be eager to sell them to a partner over and above planned export quotas. The currency system is supposed not only to back this process, but also to give the partners the incentive to sell each other as many goods, and render as many services, as possible (which is normal international practice in the rest of the world). Actually, this is not the case – rather the contrary is true.

A country is not interested in selling more, for the simple reason that its convertible-ruble surplus is beyond its reach. It is deposited with the International Bank for Economic Cooperation, and the interest paid out on it is 30 to 50 per cent less than that commonly drawn on the international capital market.

But if it succeeds in selling its goods in the competitive Western market (even at the expense of scheduled deliveries to its CMEA partners) a country gets a short-term credit from the International Bank for Economic Cooperation to cover the deficit with, the interest on which (which is also 30 to 50 per cent below that accepted in world practice) is more than compensated for through depositing hard currency earnings with Western banks; besides, there remains a substantial residual sum in hard currency.

VOLUME OF TRADE AMONG CMEA COUNTRIES IN TERMS OF CONVERTIBLE RUBLES



As we see, the CMEA's currency system makes for disintegration as such. Paradoxically, this does not happen where a goods delivery is paid for in hard currency „alien" to the CMEA. This does not suggest the conclusion that we should settle our accounts in Western currencies. What we should do is abolish the contradiction between the prices set by the CMEA on the basis of world ones (with all the allowances made) and the currency credit interest rates which set the CMEA apart from the world economy. The fact that the CMEA currency system and the world one exist side by side demands that the former be more flexible. All the more so since interaction between them is bound to continue to gain in scale and depth. However, the consensus principle which underlies decision-making at the IBEC makes this objective practically unattainable. While making sense in international political organizations, this principle, although theoretically democratic, enables the minority to dictate to the majority in economic ones.

From this angle, the IBEC is an exception to the worldwide banking practice of deciding matters by a majority vote.

Going convertible next Monday?

One of the crucial problems involved in improving the CMEA's financial system is that of currency convertibility. The fewer the obstacles to that, the more convertible a currency unit is. As far as the CMEA is concerned, the problem consists in making the convertible ruble and/or national currency units, the Soviet ruble included, convertible into hard currencies; the convertible ruble, into the currency units of the CMEA countries; and national currencies, interconvertible.

This problem is now being comprehensively discussed in our press. Sometimes even the dates on which the CMEA countries' currencies will go convertible are specified. The advocates of convertibility claim that it will automatically solve all problems, fill the market with high-quality goods, settle all debts, etc.

It should be made perfectly clear that convertibility is neither a panacea, nor an end in itself. It is just an instrument of currency policy. Before we make currency units convertible (even within the CMEA), we must create a market attractive to buyers. This market should be switched

from the centralized system of material and technical supply to wholesale trade. So far, however, we are just beginning to do something – or rather, to talk – about this.

Nevertheless, our currency could go convertible as from next Monday. The legal groundwork for that has already been laid by the appropriate government resolutions. There is such a thing as the so-called inner convertibility of the Soviet ruble in foreign trade operations: our enterprises are free to exchange their rubles for foreign currency or vice versa, on economically favourable terms. Foreign currency can be purchased by enterprises wishing to replenish their currency resources, and sold by those needing extra rubles.

The hard currency funds of enterprises could serve as sources of currency in carrying out exchange operations. The result would be a redistribution of currency resources among Soviet enterprises, with the sum of the country's foreign debt and the size of the state currency reserve remaining unchanged. The currency exchange rate could be varied arbitrarily depending on supply and demand, as is the case in any money market. At times, this rate might differ from the official one. The concepts of a "currency market" or a "free exchange rate," regarded, until recently, as impracticable in a socialist economy, are now a reality. The practice of selling hard currency by auction to manufacturers was adopted in Bulgaria in April 1988. At such auctions, hard currency is bought and sold by manufacturing plants, banks and the Bulgarian bank for Foreign Trade. In Poland, the currency market has now been functioning for quite some time. As for the U.S.S.R., a hard currency market could be created here on condition that enterprises producing for export possess real foreign currency funds, not declared ones as has been the case until now. External convertibility on a large scale will be practicable only at the stage when our national economy is ready for tough competition on the world market.

The solution to this complex problem lies not so much in the sphere of circulation as in that of production. The main thing is to back this convertibility up by producing high-quality goods, and increasing their export from the CMEA countries, including that to the outside world, A. Antonov, Deputy Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers, the permanent representative of the Soviet Union in the CMEA, pointed out after the 43rd sitting of the CMEA Session.

What can we offer on the world market

We must earn our convertible currency by selling high-quality products on the world market rather than borrow it, lest we bequeath to our posterity currency problems in addition to ecological ones.

Incidentally, there are already certain spheres in which the CMEA currency units can go convertible. The CMEA member states have been exchanging currencies in non-trading operations for a long time. In the field of tourism, for instance, the countries have agreed to make their currencies mutually convertible within certain limits and at a mutually acceptable exchange rate.

After the 43rd CMEA Session, the banks of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Mongolia and Czechoslovakia signed agreements on using national currencies in settling interfactory accounts. It is factories maintaining direct production links that create the basic market for mutual deliveries. Although its share in the total trade turnover is insignificant, this market is likely to grow as direct links expand.

One important problem waiting to be solved is that of the currency exchange rate. Its solution will largely decide the future of the practice of using national currencies in mutual trade turnover.

In Western practice, currency exchange rates are set spontaneously by the market depending on supply and demand. Exchange rates reflect the correlation between the different currencies' purchasing power, the state of the balance of payments, and a number of other indices. The CMEA member states have no such market.

In carrying out non-trading operations, the CMEA currencies' exchange rates are set by the appropriate organizations of the member states and adjusted from time to time, depending on changes in prices. The rate is based on agreed price averages. However, purely arithmetical averaging is impossible. First of all, products are not always comparable in quality, and second, (a more complex problem) the level of commodity supply in a market has an important role to play. You can't just draw a mechanical comparison between a high-.price but abundant market and a low-price but "empty" market.

The more widely national convertible currency circulates within a given country's national economy, the more difficult it is to set its exchange rate.

An enterprise which expands into another country's market finds itself in a situation different from that of a tourist. The tourist is offered a wide range of goods and services. In other words, having overpaid for the "first course," he can save on the "second" one. The enterprise can do no such thing. As a rule, it has one or two commodities to sell, and its buying potential is likewise restricted. Given a considerable price differential, the enterprise will either make an excessive profit, or sustain a loss. In both cases, exchange will be non-equivalent, and one of the sides is certain to lose interest. In an attempt to solve this problem, the U.S.S.R. introduced thousands of coefficients, practically one for every commodity, which drew well-deserved criticism from experts who saw the move as a step backwards because it complicated the settling of accounts, caused a great deal of confusion, and eliminated the advantages of using national currencies. The quest for a perfect rate-setting mechanism continues. This – and any price reform, for that matter – is unthinkable unless we improve our price formation mechanism.

Consequently, the serious faults and contradictions in the CMEA's present currency system stem from the centralized setting of currency exchange and interest rates – a practice that interferes with the promotion of the economic factor in expanding direct ties between enterprises in individual countries. As these ties expand, they will enter into ever sharper contradiction with a currency system run by directive.

The CMEA member states have mapped out a vast programme for a radical overhauling of the cooperation mechanism, of which the currency system is an inalienable part. A better currency system will stimulate and expand integration processes within the CMEA. ■

The Millennium of Christianity in Russia

Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutizy and Kolomna is interviewed by New Times reporter Igor Sukhanov.

New Times: I would not like our conversation to be confined to the subject of the millennium of Christianity in Russia. Our readers would welcome comments from you, Your Holiness, a man who commands authority in the Russian Orthodox Church, on the social standing of the church today. What difference has the process of perestroika made to the life of the laity and the clergy?

Metropolitan Juvenaly: Perestroika and religion... As a churchman who has certain information at his disposal, I believe that perestroika in religion in this country is one of the most important processes. Although the atmosphere of renewal is being felt in relations between the Russian Church and the Soviet State, it cannot be said that this process with regard to the church is proceeding at the same pace all over the country. The results of perestroika are more evident at the centre. The further you are from Moscow the more you are aware of conservative, bureaucratic, hidebound attitudes.

N.T. We will soon be celebrating the millennium of the Baptism of Russ. The mass media are reporting regularly on the preparations for the jubilee. And yet I would like to ask you again: is the State providing all the conditions in which the Orthodox Church can prepare for the celebration?

Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutizy and Kolomna (Vladimir Kirillovich Poyarkov) was born in Yaroslavl in 1935. In 1963 he was appointed head of the Russian Orthodox Mission in Jerusalem and in 1972-81 was chairman of the Moscow Patriarchy's International Relations Department. Metropolitan Juvenaly is a permanent member of the Holy Synod.

M.J. I would like to say frankly that we representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church are realistic, and do not present the State and society with problems we know they will be unable to resolve. So all the problems connected with the celebration of the millennium of Christianity in Russia have been dealt with by the Soviet government. The Council for Religious Affairs at the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers has been very helpful in the preparations. Optina Pustyn, and the Tolga Monastery in Yaroslavl, have been returned to the Russian Orthodox Church. But some of our requests have not yet been met. I refer to the opening of the Kiev-Pechery Lavra. It was closed in 1961 due to the danger of a landslide. Now the necessary work has been done and there seems to be no danger. That is why we are negotiating for the return of the monastery. We would like to see services resumed there by the time of the jubilee.*

The actual events to mark the 1000th anniversary of the baptism of Russ will be a veritable festival of faith and prayer for the church. We are preparing many souvenirs for the jubilee. I would like to mention an album of ecclesiastical music put out by Melodia.

N.T. The festivities will focus on the St. Daniel Monastery in Moscow. The restoration and redecoration work is drawing to a close there. But there are many other monuments of church architecture in our country. Unfortunately, one can hardly name a place where these monuments are in the state of repair warranted by their value. What is the Russian Orthodox Church doing to redress this situation?

M.J. The state of monuments is a matter of grave concern and anxiety to both churchmen and the general public. Of late the press has been speaking more and more frequently of the need to restore places of worship. One can say that a body of public opinion on this matter has emerged.

The All-Russia Society for the preservation of monuments has done much to rectify the situation. Year in, year out, the Russian Orthodox Church makes donations to the Society. But time has shown that the Society is unable to take care of all the church buildings that need to be repaired. Now two more non-government organizations have been set up with which the Russian church is working closely. They are the U.S.S.R. Culture Foundation and the All-Russia Culture Foundation. It is my conviction, however, that non-government organizations alone cannot solve this problem...

Many quarters must contribute to this work. We need not only money but highly qualified specialists, the necessary equipment and many other things. And, of course, the Russian Orthodox Church will support any initiatives in this sacred and useful matter.

N.T. You are suggesting then that the preservation and restoration of monuments of church architecture would be greatly aided by collaboration between believers and non-believers. Incidentally, the problem of our cooperation is increasingly often the subject of public debate. In what areas do you think this cooperation could yield the best results?

M.J. As far as the internal problems of this country are concerned, I wouldn't divide Soviet people into believers and non-believers. I would rather speak of our common duty as citizens. The Orthodox faith need not prevent one from being a good citizen of one's country. So all citizens of the U.S.S.R. should make the concerns of their country their own.

The public image of the Russian Orthodox Church as a religious organization is another matter. It is in the field of peace-making that its cooperation with public organizations in this country is most fruitful, best organized and most visible. Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church are involved in all the peacemaking organizations (I am not

* The Precouncil Bishops' Conference of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow on March 28-31 declared in a communiqué: "The Church expects a positive decision on the request it made several years ago concerning the return of the Far and Near caves of the Kiev-Pechery Lavra (Monastery). It is one of the major concerns of the prelacy of the Russian Orthodox Church."

Kiev-Pechery Lavra.

going to list them here) and many other non-government organizations such as the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, the Committee for European Security and Cooperation, the Public Commission for International Cooperation on Humanitarian Issues and Human Rights... Our contribution is extensive and significant, and has been recognized in this country and abroad. You will remember that Mikhail Gorbachev mentioned representatives of the Church amongst the people who had contributed to the signing of the historic agreement between him and President Reagan of the U.S.A. in December 1987. I think we should look for further ways of expanding and strengthening our cooperation.

N.T. This does not seem to be a smooth process. Sometimes fruitful cooperation is impeded by those who spread all sorts of "authentic" rumours about the position of believers in the U.S.S.R. In the West, a lot is being said about the baiting of believers in this country. It is alleged that some have even been convicted, ostensibly on criminal charges, but in fact for their faith. What is your attitude to such allegations?

M.J. These are just rumours. The criminal code does not provide for punishment for faith. On the contrary, it envisages severe punishments for those who impinge on the religious rights of Soviet citizens. Despite the fact that this stipulation in the criminal code is widely known, allegations about the persecution of believers in this country are constantly being made in the West.

N.T. How do you account for this persistence?

M.J. Western propaganda often invokes religious motives to create an "enemy image." Now, in the period of democratization and glasnost, when we who preach the Orthodox faith are getting more and more opportunities to exercise our religious freedoms, there will be much less ground for such rumours. The Russian Orthodox Church is collaborating with religious organizations in the capitalist countries and worldwide in order to promote mutual understanding between peoples and create images of partnership and friendship in people's minds.

N.T. And yet, at a recent conference in the Netherlands where you were a member of our delegation to the Public Commission for International Cooperation on Humanitarian Issues and Human Rights, you were given a long list of people who have allegedly suffered for their faith.

M.J. There were more than 200 names on the list. In my speech I said that before my departure I had made special inquiries at the Council for Religious Affairs and been told that as of the beginning of January 1988, 18 people condemned for violating laws governing the performance of religious rites were in detention. Some of them have now been released. But the fate of the remaining detainees is a matter of concern to us. So, the list was inaccurate and, moreover, it included many believers who had been convicted of criminal charges which had nothing to do with problems of religion.

I would like to remind you that of the 22 major international human rights documents, the U.S.A. has ratified only six, while the Soviet government has ratified all of them. Clearly there are still many human rights problems that really call for wide-ranging and thorough international discussion.

N.T. The process of democratization and glasnost has dramatically changed the social climate in this country. What hopes does the Church link with this process?

M.J. First of all, we want to have real conditions in which to exercise freedom of conscience. Now, in the conditions of democratization and glasnost, we can seek to expand the existing conditions. The top priority for us believers is to obtain churches for services. Recently services have been resumed in previously closed churches. But I cannot say that the reopening of churches has assumed a wide scale, comparable with that on which they were closed during the personality cult period. Even so, we find the social atmosphere today heartening. Today believers in the U.S.S.R. can expect a favourable attitude towards the exercise of their religious rights and the opening of places of worship.

N.T. It may be an odd question, but I would like to ask what your attitude is to cooperation between the church and society in the spiritual education of man?

M.J. Spiritual life in general is a religious term. We church people have a clear idea of what spiritual life is.

N.T. What is it, then?

M.J. Moral self-perfection. The more we follow the Word of God the more spiritual we become. I believe that we are on the brink of a new stage in the activity of the church, of which neither we believers nor the public at large are yet fully aware. It is an opportune moment to speak about it on the eve of the millennium of Christianity in Russia. The three international conferences held in preparation for the anniversary have convinced us once again of the immense cultural capital the church possesses. It is a great spiritual experience which preserves its value today: religious music, icon painting, church buildings and objets d'art – all these educate the modern man. So, without in any way competing with the state institutions in improving the moral life of society, we would like to say that the church can be a useful partner in the edification of a man.

N.T. What should each individual strive for?

M.J. To fulfil his vocation. A person without a vocation is a miserable person. But if each of us devotes his life to pursuing his vocation he will not only elevate himself but is sure to do a great deal of good to other people.

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